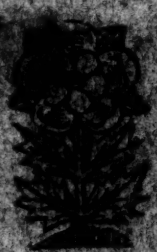
AN ANSWER TO A BOOK INTITLED, *Tractatus Theologico Politicus.*



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BIBLIOTHECA BODLEIANA

To the Right Honourable,

Charles Earl of *Winchelsea*,

Viſcount *Maidſtone*, Baron *Fitz-Herbert* of *Eaſtwell*, &c.

My Lord,

THIS Treatiſe being by me deſign'd, for the Vindication of Reveal'd Religion, againſt thoſe Deiſtical and Sceptical Notions which are too frequent in this Age, had there been no ſingular obligations to induce me, yet could I not

have found a more proper *Patron* than your Lordſhip; whom all muſt acknowledge to be a Favourer and Protector of Religion, Virtue, and whatſoever is Praiſe-worthy amongſt men. I am very ſenſible, that my ſmall Station in the Church, might very well have excus'd me, from engaging in an argument which may juſtly require a Perſon of more Dignity, Learning, and Leiſure, but I am at the ſame time very well ſatisfy'd, that your Lordſhip and all good men will not expect much, where but little is given; and therefore in the ſame plainneſs

and ſincerity wherein I at firſt wrote it, I preſume to dedicate it to your Lordſhip, as a ſmall token, how much, I am,

Your Lordſhip's moſt Humble,

and Obliged Servant,

Matthias Earbery.

THE PREFACE TO THE READER.

Courteous Reader,

THough I am not of the Opinion, That whosoever writes a Book, ought to write a Preface (for some are so good that they need none, and some so bad that they don't deserve one) yet I think my self to lye under an obligation, to

give the World an Account of those Reasons, which induced me to Answer a Book, which if it had its due deserts, ought to be confined to silence and darkness for ever. 1. *I might here alledge in the first Place, that the* Tractatus Theologico-Politicus, *has not as yet the honour, to receive an intire confutation, from any one Learned Hand, that I know in* Europe. *Bishop* Boyl *in his little Body of Divinity, and almost all our Moderns, who have wrote in Vindication of the Scriptures, have taken notice of Divers of its dangerous positions, as they lye scattering up and down, in almost every page of it, from whence I might have leave to conclude, that if those Learned men did think, that it was necessary to Answer the chief Objections, against the Authority of the Scriptures one by one; a Collective Answer to the whole Book,*

would

would be more ſatisfactory to the world, and more beneficial to the publick Good. And therefore I was not induced to undertake this task, becauſe I thought none could do it better, but becauſe none before me had began ſo uſeful a work. I conſider'd alſo in the ſecond place, that moſt who have wrote upon this Subject, have either done it in ſuch a Philoſophical manner, as is not eaſily intelligible by the Vulgar, or have proceeded againſt him, and his Party, by ſuch Philological Arguments, as tho very Learned, yet at moſt are but Conjectural, and therefore never can convince a ſtubborn Sceptiſt, *tho they are very pleaſing to Ingenious Men. Now tho this way of Writing, is very taking, whilſt the Argument is only toſs'd too and fro amongſt Learned Men, yet it is not ſufficient, when ſuch Deiſtical Principles begin to be Popular, and ſeize upon the minds*

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of those, who though they want Reason, yet stand in need of no Obstinacy to defend the same. And therefore since this Book has, as I am informed, received lately some impressions in our own Language; I thought it might not be amiss to administer the antidote, in the same vehicle, in which the Party has presented the Poyson; and waving all Conjectural Arguments that are drawn from humane Authority, or whose force depends upon the knowledge of Books, or are too remote from common Sense, to be understood by all Men; I have laid down chiefly such Principles, as all may understand, and all who uuderstand them must needs admit to be true: And I hope that it will be apparent from thence, That they who Renounce their Religion, into which they are Baptized, must Renounce their Reason too, which they boast to be

their

their only guide. Nor am I ignorant, that the Author of this Book, was very well verſed (pardon ſo favourable an expreſſion) in the Writings of Moſes *and the Prophets; underſtood the Original Language, and had made a diligent ſearch, to find all weak places, wherein he might Aſſault and Ruine the impregnable Fortreſs of Reveal'd Religion. Mr.* Hobbs *had another way of trifling with thoſe Books of Scripture, and wreſting ſome particular places to his odd Opinions: But this Author begins at the very Root and Foundation, by taking away all Divine Authority, from Prophecy, Miracles, or Inſpiration, and making all the ſacred Pen-men, to be no other than either Mad-men, or Impoſtors. Now tho ſuch ſentiments, ought rather to be puniſhed by the Judge, than refuted by the Divine, yet ſince too much liberty has relax-*

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ed the Reins, both of Civil and Eccleſiaſtick Power, it is neceſſary that ſuch Weapons ſhould be uſed, as are therefore left us, becauſe they could not eaſily be taken away. And I thought it would be at leaſt ſome puniſhment, as it were, to the very Shades and Manes of this Author, to ſhew the world, that he, who ſo long has found a place in the Libraries and Hands of very Learned Men, does ſcarce for his ſtupidity, and trifling way of arguing, merit to obtain a place amongſt the loweſt forms of inferiour Animals: And I am ſure if he could ſay nothing to the purpoſe againſt Reveal'd Religion, his little Diſciples of the Town, can ſay a great deal leſs. But indeed the greateſt motive of all, was the general diſpoſition of men of all Degrees and Capacities in this Age, to ridicule our Religion as much as they can, nay, a great deal

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farther than their own Abilities will give them leave. *How will ſome* Little People *vent a Jeſt* upon the Bible, *or argue againſt* Moſes, *who never read a Chapter in it, with that* Attention which is due to thoſe Sacred Writings; *And never*, even in their Younger Days, *knew any thing beyond a* Play *or a* Romance. *I will not ſay*, That too much Liberty has given Opportunity to Deiſm, to grow up with thoſe other Weeds that infeſt this Nation: *Though if I ſhould, it might be found to appear not very unlikely to thoſe who conſider, that Mr.* Hobbs's *Leviathan*, was brought forth in the like times of Liberty, and that this Author pleads for nothing more than Liberty to Exclude the Conſcientious Fear of God out of the World: *But certain it is*, That the General

neral Corruption of Manners, Contempt of the Clergy, Bold Agitation of the *Socinian* Controverſy, amongſt the Greateſt Men of the ſame Church, *do render diſcourſes of this Nature very neceſſary*, to ſtop the Mouths of thoſe Mockers, whom St. *Peter* long ſince Prophecy'd ſhould come in the laſt days, ſaying, *Where is the promiſe of his Coming*?

For ſince the Fathers fell aſleep, All things continue as they were, from the beginning of the Creation. *I will add but one word more, and that is*, To acquaint thee, that my deſign being only to Anſwer this Author, I have followed him exactly (κατὰ πόλας) to the End of the 7th Chapter, and there left him, as being weary of going further after a falſe light to no purpoſe. *For having*

having consider'd all his Cavils, against the Prophets, Prophecy, Divine Law, Miracles, and Interpretation of Scripture, I thought it altogether needless to proceed any further.

And thus having given thee an Account of my design, I must leave the performance to thy favourable censure, and wish thee a hearty Farewell.

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AN ANSWER TO THE PREFACE OF *Tractatus Theologico Politicus.*

THere was not long since a young Gentleman, whose Name was *Scepticus*, who was pleased to retire from the noise of the *Town*, into the more refreshing Solitude of the healthful Country. He was of a fiery Genius, always eager after new things, and most pleased with those Thoughts, which he thought were farthest removed out of the Road of the Vulgar. He had began his Studies with a diligent Perusal of the *Classick* Authors, from whom he received a deep

impreſſion of all thoſe Beauties, both of Thought and of Expreſſion, which are ſo viſibly Eminent in thoſe Antient Writers; from thence he proceeded to the Peruſal of the Moral VVritings of the Antient Philoſophers, but preſently taking a diſguſt at Notions he thought too obvious and common, he flew from thence to the Atomical Philoſophy, as it ſtands revived by *Des Cartes*, *Gaſſendus* and others. This pleaſed him for a ſeaſon extreamly, becauſe it gave no deference to Authority, but let looſe the mind of man, to enjoy its primitive liberty of Thinking, and gave him vaſt Ideas of what mighty things might be done by mere Matter and Motion. But coming abroad into the VVorld, and finding that Religion was the grand Theme of all Mens diſcourſe, as well thoſe who lived according to its Rules, as thoſe who did not, he reſolved to apply his mind to ſearch into its abſtruſeſt Miſteries. And it happening at that time the *Socinian* Controverſie was revived with a great deal of heat, he applied his mind very diligently to read all the *Socinian* Authors. He was a long time much pleaſed with their VVritings, becauſe they ſeemed to Interpret Scripture with an ayre and freedom, which he of all things moſt affected, and extoll'd Human Reaſon to

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ſuch a height, as was moſt agreeable to the Towring thoughts of his own Ambition. But finding at laſt, that thoſe VVriters had an excellent knack of making the Scriptures ſpeak whatſoever was agreeable to their own Sentiments; It bred in him an Admiration of the Ingenuity of thoſe VVriters, but a contempt of the Scriptures themſelves, which he eaſily perceived, had no command over theſe Authors, whom he moſt admired. It was his misfortune at the ſame time to light upon the *Tractatus Theologico Politicus*, of *Spinoſa*. This turn'd him a perfect Deiſt, he threw away his Bible, and ſet up this Book in the room of it. He now thought himſelf to be ſet at liberty above the ſlaviſh condition of thoſe, who thought they were to be rul'd by their Bibles; and ſo fond was he of this Author, that every Summer, he carried him into the Fields with him in his hands, and each Winter he wore him in his Muff. There liv'd in the Neighbourhood an Old Grave Divine, who, in compaſſion to his Youth, did often pay this Young Man a Viſit; and had often been laugh'd at by him in the Pulpit, for his Zeal for Religion. He came to him one day in his Garden, as he was reading in this Author, and ſeem'd altogether raviſh'd with the Entertainment; and

being well acquainted with him, was thus familiarly pleaſed to accoſt him.

Logic. Sir, you ſeem mightily pleaſed; Pray what Book is that you hug, with ſo much Extacy and Rapture?

Scept. It is a Book ſo agreeable to my Reaſon, which ever ſince my Childhood, ſtruggled for Freedom from Popular Errors, that I embrace it as my Deliverer from the Darkneſs, under which I was bred, by ignorant Nurſes, Tutors and Maſters; and as ſuch I recommend it, to the peruſal of all thoſe, who rather deſire to be Men betimes, than live long, till they are over-grown Children, with long Beards and ſhallow Brains, trembling at the Thoughts of Inviſible Powers.

Logic. I ſuppoſe then you are feeding upon a Limb of *Hobbs*'s *Leviathan*, and are juſt now returning Thanks (to the Lord knows what) for the plentiful Collation.

Scept. Hobbs was indeed a very pretty Fellow, and not eaſily ſcared with *Religious Bugbears*. But *this Author* deſerves rather to be eſteemed *his Tutor* than *his Scholar*; He has ſuch a Knack of Expoſing all the *Defects* of thoſe Books you call *the Scriptures*, with that Strength of Reaſon, and Solidity of Judgment, that apparently

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ly ſhews it to be the Work of the Incomparable *Spinoſa*.

Logic. I ſuppoſe it is then his *Tractatus Theologico Politicus*. Pray what is the Deſign of that Celebrated Book?

Scept. That is beſt known by the Preface, where he firſt ſhews, *That if Men lived always in Proſperity, and by their own good Conduct could become Maſters of their moſt deſired Events, they would never be entangled with the vanity of Superſtition. But when they are driven into thoſe Straits, from which they cannot expedite themſelves, they are apt to believe any thing; the Mind is tumbled up and down between Hope and Fear, and not knowing where to reſt on Earth, looks up for a ſupport from Heaven; Implores the Deity with Tears diſgraceful to any Woman; runs after* Augurs, South-ſayers, *and* Conjurers, *and hunts for inſpiration, in Fools and Madmen.* An example of which he gives us in *Alexander*, who had in any difficulty recourſe to his Prophets, as Servants of his Gods, but in proſperity forgot both them and their *Maſters*. See the Pref. of this Author.

Logic. And what does he infer from hence?

Scept. That Men are prone to *Superſtition by Fear only, and not by any Innate Senſe of a Deity, as you Divines would make us believe.*

Logic. But what if this Grand Suppoſition, *That Men are only Superſtitious in Adverſity*, is altogether falſe, and to be refuted by Ten Thouſand *Inſtances*, both National and Perſonal, Ancient and Modern? The *Jews* were never more *ſuperſtitious*, (if the *Idolatrous Worſhip* of the *Sun*, *Moon* and *Stars*, is Superſtition) than in their Higheſt Proſperity: For then they became aſhamed as it were of the Rites and Ceremonies taught by *Moſes*, and grew ambitious of rivalling their Neighbouring Nations, in all the Gallantry and Pageantry of their *ſuperſtitious Worſhip*. So that your admired Author, by poring upon *Quintus Curtius*, for one ſingle Inſtance, has quite forgot the *numerous Examples* to the contrary, which he might have found in almoſt every Leaf of the Bible, or Page of *Livy's* Hiſtory.

Scept. Don't tell me of *Jews*; I believe we know little of them, but what ſome Modern Impoſtors have convey'd to us; it is apparent to me, that all the reſt of Mankind, are driven to ſuperſtition by Fear only.

Logic. Not ſo neither. Pray what Nation ſhew'd leſs Fear, and more Superſtition than the Ancient *Romans*? And what Nation had ever more *Victories*, and more *Altars* than that Famous Monarchy? Who were ever more punctual in returning

Thanks

Thanks to their ſuppoſed *Deities*, than their *Senate* and *Generals*? And yet I am inclin'd to think, that they did not much fear their *Enemies*, when they returned Thanks to their *Gods* that they had beat 'em, and that it was rather a ſenſe of Gratitude than of Fear, which was the Mother of that Pompous Devotion.

Scept. You talk of whole Nations by the Lump; can you give any Inſtance to the contrary in a ſingle Perſon?

Log. Yes, Sir, that I can, without tumbling over any large Volumes of Hiſtory: *Nebuchadnezzar* was a Fortunate Prince, and Great Conqueror; nor did I ever hear that he was very much a Coward; and yet he kept (ſee *Dan.*2.2.) ſeveral *Nurſeries* of *Magicians*, *Aſtrologers* and *Sorcerers*, to interpret *Dreams*, predict *Futurities*, and inſtruct his Court and People in the *ſuperſtitious Cuſtoms* of that Age and Nation.

Scept. But tho he was ſecure for the preſent, yet perhaps his fear of *future Evils* inclin'd him to ſo much Superſtition.

Log. What then do you think of his Gratitude to Heaven, when he was returned to his Reaſon and his Throne (*Dan.*4.27.) and no Paſſion but Joy could find room in his Breaſt, was that alſo the Effect of Fear?

Scept. I am not in love with *Scripture-Examples*: Let us have One out of ſome honeſt *Pagan* Author.

Log. Then your own admired *Curtius*, ſhall be my next Witneſs, even in that very *Alexander*, whom with equal front and ignorance, cites to the contrary; for no man was ever more ſuperſtitious than that *Grecian* Conqueror, when he was in the midſt of all his *Triumphs*, and as far from Fear as from Adverſity; it was then that he fancied himſelf to be the Son of *Jupiter*, an Enthuſiaſm not eaſy to be parallell'd, and impoſſible to be exceeded by any) and the joy of this, joyned with his other good fortune, ſo far tranſported him, that it quite excluded all that *ſuperſtitious Fear*, which his *Southſayers* endeavoured to raiſe, by forbidding his entrance into the fatal City of *Babylon*.

Scept. *Alexander*, tho a Great Man, yet was but One Man: You cannot deny, that Fear, by its natural Energy, is the only cauſe of Superſtition, nor can you aſſign any other.

Log. Yes, *Hope* and *Love* are as certain *Motives* to what you call *Superſtition*, as *Fear* or *Sorrow*. For have not Men Worſhipped a Wrong Deity, or the True God the Wrong Way, (which is the Whole of Superſtition) out of hopes of being made more Happy? Elſe how came the moſt Ancient *Pagans* to Deify the moſt benign of their *Friends* and *Benefactors*?

Scept.

Scept. I hope you will at leaſt grant, that Superſtition ariſes from the Paſſions of Mankind, as may ſufficiently be ſeen by its mutable Nature, and not from any Idea of a God, that is obvious to the Reaſon of all Men.

Log. All Religion (which your *A*— calls Superſtition) does not take its Original from the *Paſſions*, but from the *Reaſon* of Mankind. No man that is not perfectly mad, would Love, or Fear, or Worſhip a God, or any Inviſible Power, unleſs he was firſt fully perſuaded of the real Exiſtence of ſuch a Being or Beings, that can hurt, or elſe relieve him: For the *Paſſions*, tho never ſo violent, could never hurry on a Man to Worſhip a What he thought to be a *Non-ens*, that had no Exiſtence but in his *own Fancy*. And this is the Reaſon, Why Beaſts, that are capable of *Hope*, and *Fear*, and *Love*, (or at leaſt ſomething very like *thoſe Paſſions*) are yet ſtrangers to all manner of Religion, *viz.* becauſe they have no *prævious Notion* of a Deity, to ſtir up thoſe *Paſſions* in them: Otherwiſe an Hare, that flies from all things, would be as *ſuperſtitious* as the *Alexander the Great*, who made all to fly before him.

Scept. My Notion is, That it is the Fear of Mankind, vvorking violently upon the Underſtanding, that created all Notion of Inviſible Povvers.

Log.

Log. And my Notion is, That it is the Reaſon of Mankind, that could not ſolve the Creation of the World, and the Original of Man, but by having Recourſe to ſome Firſt Cauſe, vvhich excited the Paſſions of Man to adore their Creator, and thoſe other *Inviſible Powers*, vvhich they preſumed did govern the World under him.

Scept. I do not ſpeak of Natural, but that which you *Divines* do call Revealed Religion. This is that Grand Cheat that the *Prieſts* in all Ages have dreſs'd up in Various Habits to pleaſe the Vulgar, who are always of a mutable Temper, and to keep them in ſubjection to thoſe Monarchs who want a Bridle to reſtrain unruly Subjects. But nothing is more fatal to a *Commonwealth* than too much of what you call *Revealed Religion*, which is the Mother of Seditions and Tumults, and a great Enemy to a free Trade. And truly, this (I hope I ſpeak to a Friend) makes me very much wiſh we could ſee a *Commonwealth* in *England*, that we might enjoy the liberty of thinking and ſpeaking of Religion as we pleas'd, which now is too much reſtrain'd. And my Author tells you, *That the Grand Deſign of his Book was to plead for ſuch a liberty.*

Log. I can ſee no Reaſon, why Religion ſhould not be as neceſſary to ſupport a *Commonwealth* as a *Monarchy*: For do not

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Commonwealths call in the help of Oaths, to bind their Subjects to Allegiance, as well as *Monarchs*? And may not Diviſions about Religion, that cauſe Seditions, as well ariſe where this Liberty is, as where there is none? For ſuppoſe One Numerous Party, not contented with Liberty, will aim at Dominion over the other, may not *Civil Wars* on this account as well riſe up in a *Commonwealth* as in a *Monarchy*? In all the *Species* of Government, there is ſome Supreme Power, either in One, or in a few, or in a great many, which (as the Apoſtle teaches) *ought not to be reſiſted, not only for Wrath; but Conſcience-ſake*: And if you take away *Conſcience* from the Subject, and leave nothing but *Wrath* to reſtrain his Rebellion, there will be no One Form of Government in the World, that can be much more ſecure than another, from private Plots and Contrivances of revolting Subjects. Beſides, your Author ſeems to me to be very ignorant in Hiſtory, when he would confine Religion to *Monarchy*, as *Storks* are ſaid by Nature to be confin'd to a *Commonwealth*. For never did Superſtition flouriſh more than in the City of *Rome* and others, whilſt they were under a *Republican Government*; which gave occaſion to S. *Pauls* Reproof to the *Athenians*; *I perceive that in all things you are too ſuperſtitious*. And yet the Subjects of both, were as glorious for Arms

and

and Learning, as any of our *Modern Republicks*. I muſt confeſs, as for what you ſay, that Religion is an Enemy to Free Trade, is partly true, becauſe it takes away from Trade, the freedom of lying, and cheating, and defrauding, which ſome perhaps think eſſential to it: But if you Gentlemen deſire a *Commonwealth*, that you may barter away our Religion for a Free Trade, I ſay, pray God bleſs the *Monarchy* of *England*.

Scep. Prithee don't think we deſire to take away your Religion: Your *Reaſon* ought to be your Only Religion, and that I am ſure no man deſires to take from you. My Author's Deſign is only to take off thoſe Prejudices which the Vulgar entertain of the Scriptures, who deſpiſe *Reaſon*, and think that the *Scriptures* are the *Only Oracles of Truth*— In order to this my Author promiſes to demonſtrate, *That Prophecy, or Revelation, is nothing elſe but ſtrength of Fancy. That the Ancient Prophets were only Men of a ſtrong Imagination, and of a weak Reaſon. That the Divine Law is nothing elſe but fatal Neceſſity. That Miracles are only thoſe Works of Nature of whoſe Cauſe we are ignorant. That the true way of interpreting thoſe Books you call Scriptures, does ſhew that they are of Humane Invention, and that every individual man has a Right and Authority to interpret Scripture as he pleaſes. And that—*

Log.

Log. No farther, I beſeech you; this is Task enough for one time. Let us therefore leave his Preface, and proceed to the Book it ſelf, that we may ſee,

Quid dignum tanto feret hic promiſſor hiatu.

Scep. With all my heart: And firſt let's begin with his *Definition of Prophecy*, and ſo orderly examine the ſtrength of all his Invincible Arguments.

Log. I am content; and alſo further promiſe, That if he brings any Objections againſt Revealed Religion, which I cannot anſwer; I will then become of his Opinion, and ſubſcribe to whatſoever you will have me.

Scep. It is as fair as I can wiſh it to be—— Thus therefore he begins:

Explicit Præfatio, & incipit hoc loco primum.

De

DE
PROPHETIA.

A. PRophecy, or *Revelation*, is the certain Knowledge of ſomething (or Things) revealed unto Men by God: How do you like this Definition?

The. Very well, provided the Author thinks as he ſpeaks; and does not impoſe upon us (as his Cuſtom is) by ambiguous Terms.

A. Well then: Mind the Conſequence: All Natural Knowledge may properly be called *Propheſie*; for thoſe things which we know by Natural Light, depend upon the ſole knowledge of God, and his Eternal Decrees: But our Mob-Divines, that ſtand gazing with their Mouths open to Heaven, to catch *Wonders*, exclude Natural Reaſon from Prophecy; as if the one deſcended from Heaven, and the other ſprang from Earth onely: And yet humane reaſon is Divine,

in as much as the very faculties were by God Created ; and it is only excelled by Propheſie in two things ; Firſt, that Propheſie extends its bounds further : And Secondly, it cannot be cauſed by the Laws of Nature.

The. And Pray Sir, what Charms can you ſee in ſuch a Jargon of Diſcourſe, as ſhould draw your minds away one ſtep from reveal'd Religion ? For here is a very abſurd confuſion of Natural Knowledge, and that which proceeds from Divine Revelation. No Man that apprehends the neceſſary Connexion of two Terms, was ever yet call'd a Prophet, by any but this. *A.*---If Natural Knowledge might properly be called Propheſy, then every Man that by his Natural Reaſon, could comprehend all the neceſſary Properties of a Triangle, or the undoubted certainty of Mathematical Axioms ; or thoſe ſelf-evident Propoſitions, which are known by a bare perception of the Terms, would be a Prophet ; and ſo not only ( ) all the Lord's People would be Prophets, but all the Devil's People too ; for as much as ſome Propoſitions, by the ſole Light of Reaſon, are evident to all Mankind.

A. You miſtake my Author; for he tells you, page 2. *That tho Natural Knowledge is Divine, yet the Teachers of it cannot be called Pro-*

Prophets: Becauſe whatever they Teach, others (without the help of Faith or Credulity) may know as well as themſelves.

T. This only ſhews with how much Confidence and Stupidity your Infallible Author contradicts himſelf; for p. 1. he aſſerts, *Ex traditâ definitione ſequitur cognitionem naturalem Prophetiam vocari poſſe*—— What more evident, than that he may be called a *Prophet*, who is endowed with natural Knowledge, if natural Knowledge may be called *Prophecy?*

A. That is but a ſmall miſtake: His true meaning is, That Reaſon is not leſs certain and Divine than Revelation its ſelf.

T. Natural Things are called Divine upon a Threefold Account; as they are the Workmanſhip of God; and in this ſenſe all things that have a real Subſiſtance, may be called Divine, as they are the Works of God: But the word (*Divine*) is not frequently uſed in this ſignification, becauſe it is too general, and comprehends ſo much, that it determines too little. Or, 2. Things are more frequently called *Divine*, that for their Excellence ſeem to have ſome reſemblance of the very Nature and Perfections of God: This *Homer* ſtiles his *Hero*, θεῖος Ἀχιλλεύς. and θεῖος ὁδοσσεύς: and Grace is called θεία φύσις, by the Apoſtle: And indeed in this Senſe, the rational Faculties of the

the Soul may not be improperly called *Divine*, forasmuch as they were not only given us by God, but do still bear his Image and Inscription upon them. But (3*dly*, and *lastly*), Those things are most properly stiled *Divine*, which are immediately produced by the Power of God, not according to the regular Laws of Nature, but in a manner altogether superior to them: And in this most proper signification, *Creation*, *Prophecy* and *Miracles* are the Works of God, and bear all the Characters of Divinity upon them; because the First Cause is only concerned in the Production of them, without the Concurrent Efficacy of Inferior Agents. Hence it is that the Evangelist, reckoning up the Genealogy of our Blessed Saviour, names the other Patriarchs as Sons of Men, because they came into the World, according to the usual manner of Generation; But *Adam* he calls the *Son of God*; for tho his Body was out of preceeding matter, yet it was formed by the immediate Power of God, without Observation of the regular Course of Nature. The very *Magicians* could say, when they saw *Lice* miraculously produced by *Aaron*'s *Rod*, That *this was the very Finger of God*; because they knew it was not within the Bounds of the Power of Nature, and that could not be done by those Inferior In-

viſible Powers, which they invoked. And the Prophets call their inſpired Writings, *The Word of the Lord*, becauſe not deduced from the ſetled Courſe and Order of things, but delivered to them immediately by God himſelf; in reſpect to which it is called by St. *Peter*, the *Sure Word of Prophecy*.

A. What do you infer from hence?

T. That your Author trifles, when he equals Humane Reaſon to Divine Inſpiration, ſaying very boldly, That (*Æquali jure, ac alia (cognitio) quæcunque illa ſit, divina vocari poteſt*) when it is evident, That the one is founded on the Natural Order of things, and therefore ſubject to thoſe Imperfections, which are common to all the Works of Nature: The other comes immediately from God, and has no imperfection in it. Our Reaſon, tho firſt given us by God, yet is corrupted by our ſelves: The Idolatry and Superſtition of the firſt Ages of the World, do abundantly ſhew how much Natural Reaſon is ſubject to be led aſide into Error, by Senſe, Paſſion, Intereſt and Example, in the things that belong unto God: There is a Light of Nature, but it is no more than a glimmering Light, which diſcovers ſome, but not all things, that are neceſſary to be known, ſo clearly and diſtinctly as may make it compleatly beneficial to Mankind. Beſides, it is often darkned by

by Inadvertency, Haſt, and Male-Organization of the Body, and a thouſand other Impediments: But *Revelation* is ſuch an impreſſion upon the Mind of the Prophets, as gives a diſcovery of ſomething unknown before; for to reveal, is to detect ſomething that before was cover'd, and always creates a threefold certainty in all inſpired Authors: 1. It renders them ſure that it is God who ſpeaks to them; 2*dly*, That they rightly apprehend what he means: 3*dly*, That whatever he reveals, is infallibly ſure; For that *God will not deceive*, is the very *Baſis* of all Humane, and of all Divine Knowledg. Your Author therefore very truly aſſerts, *That Revelation exceeds the Bounds of Humane Reaſon*, becauſe it extends it ſelf to the hidden things of God, *viz.* The Knowledge of a future Happineſs, and the ways and means by which we may gain the ſame; as alſo, becauſe it cannot be cauſed by the regular Order of Nature, but muſt proceed immediately from God; but then he very abſurdly endeavours to equal Humane Reaſon to it, when in the ſame breath he confeſſed, that it is exceeded by Divine Revelation.

A. You talk of Certainty in Divine Revelation; but for my part, I have no Idea, how a Mortal Man can be certain what or when God ſpeaks to him.

T. Prophecy being a complex Idea, as ſignifying the diſcovery of ſomething made unto Man, by the immediate Power of God, we can have no diſtinct Knowledge of its manner of producing Certainty in the Mind of Man, unleſs all the ſimple Idea's, which compound the ſame, extend into our Underſtanding, by our Senſes, or were obvious to it by a ſimple intuition: But the Manner of God's ſpeaking to Man by Revelation, being altogether Supernatural, it cannot be compleatly underſtood by thoſe, who have had only Experience of the uſe of Natural Faculties. Suppoſe a Man born into the World with a Sixth Senſe, whereby he could diſcern the Properties and Differences of External things, it would not follow, that becauſe other men had not a compleat Idea, how he perceiv'd the differences of things, that therefore he had no perception at all. A man ſo framed by God, might have clear and diſtinct perception, and yet not be able by any force of Words, to make his Neighbours underſtand the manner of it. For the Words that now are, do ſignifie ſome Idea's which have already been common to Mankind; but where the thing it ſelf was always unknown, there Words, whoſe ſignification extends no further than to things that are already known, can never explain

them

them to us. A man that never had the Experience of the Illumination of a Prophetick Spirit, can no more have a compleat Idea of what it is, than a blind man can have of Colours; he may be taught by rote to give definitions, but all the definitions that can be given, will never give him the true Idea of Light or Colour.

A. Then Prophetical Light is something, but you don't know what.

T. Yes, We know as much of the Nature of Divine Revelation, as is necessary for us to know; and he that enquires after more, ought not to be gratify'd in his needless curiosity. We know from the Nature of God, and the Constitutiou of our own Souls, that it is not impossible for God to communicate his Will and Pleasure to whomsoever he pleases; for it would be strange indeed, if God, who made the Soul capable of understanding every thing else, should not be able to make it capable of understanding himself, whenever he should vouchsafe to speak to it. For why should not Man be as capable of knowing when God speaks to him in a supernatural way, as when his Neighbour speaks to him, according to the usual course of Custom and Nature. All things are possible with God, that do not imply a contradiction in the Terms, or are not directly repugnant to

the eſſential Purity of the Divine Nature; but it is no more a contradiction (tho more unuſual) for God to ſpeak to Man, than it is for one Man to ſpeak to another; nor is it repugnant to the Divine Purity, to teach Man his Will, to obey which is Man's utmoſt perfection. We alſo know, from as Authentick Records of Antiquity, as any are now extant, That ſome Men, Eminent for Wiſdom, Learning and Vertue, have affirmed, That God has ſpoken to them; and we have Reaſon enough to believe that they were certain of it, becauſe they expoſed their Lives and Fortunes, and all that is dear to Fleſh and Blood, in compliance to the Doctrines they receiv'd from God: and that no room might be left for doubt, the ſame God that thus ſpake to them, gave them power to do ſuch things, as quite ſurpaſſed the power of Nature, and to foretel ſuch Events, as were not poſſible to be gueſs'd at by any humane Underſtanding. If therefore we, who by Faith believe the Doctrines taught by theſe inſpired Authors, are deceived, we are deceived by God himſelf, who alone could give ſuch Gifts of Prophecy and Miracles to the Sons of Men: And if our Faith is deceived by God, we know not but that our Reaſon is deceived too: For if God can deceive in one, why may we not think he may do it in the other?

And

And then our A— is so far from being certain to get the Victory, by such Disputes, over Revealed Religion, that he cannot be certain that he disputes at all.

A. What Mathematical Certainty have you, that the Records of these mens Prophesies are true ?

T. Matters of Fact are never the less true, for not being capable of Mathematical Demonstration. It is as true, that *Julius Cæsar* came into *England*, as it is that the whole is equal to all its parts, tho the Truth of his coming hither, cannot be demonstrated by any Problem in *Euclid.*

A. I have heard, with great patience, your long discourse of God's speaking unto Men, and the wonderful and unintelligible Certainty from thence arising. But what (as our Author tells you) if this Notion of God's speaking unto Men, prove a meer Fancy, proceeding from a mistaken *Hebraism*; I hope you will be judg'd by the Scriptures themselves.

T. Yes, upon these Conditions: 1. That the Authority of Scriptures may be as well urg'd for as against themselves. 2. That every difficulty in those Sacred Writings, shall not presently be judged a Falshood, till there be some further demonstration of its absurdity. 3. That you allow the same liberty of deducing Consequences from

Texts of Scripture, a[illegible] you take to your ſelves. 4. Then that due regard be had to the Writings of the New, as well as of the Old.

A. With all my heart. 1*ſt.* Then God revealed the Law to *Moſes* by a true Voice, as we are told, *Exod.* 25. 22. but this was the only true Voice from God that ever was heard. The words of the *Decalogue*, according to ſome Men, were not ſpoken; they only heard a confuſed Noiſe, and ſo perceiv'd the Law as then written in their Hearts; tho, in truth, thoſe Notions of Good and Evil were engrafted there long before. Nay, it is evident, that what you call *Revelation*, was only the Appearance of ſome Images to the ſight, or Phantacy of the Prophet. See *Chron.* 22. how God ſhewed *David* his Anger, by an Angel holding a Sword in his hand; and the ſame hapned to *Balaam*. By Images not real, but depending upon the Phantacy of the Prophet, God revealed to *Joſeph*, that he ſhould have the Dominion over all his Brethren. Obſerve *Numb.* 12. 6, 7. and you will ſee what ſlight aſſurance was given to the other Prophets—*If there be a Prophet amongſt you, I the Lord will make my ſelf known unto him in a Viſion, and will ſpeak unto him in a Dream.*

T. Confident Aſſertions, without Equi-

valent

valent Strength of Reaſon, impoſe upon none but thoſe that are willing to be cheated. It is ſpoken without Authority of Scripture, that God pronounced the Law only with a true and real Voice; All that we can learn from *Exod.* 25. 22. is, That God promiſed to be ready to communicate his Will to *Moſes, from above the Mercy-ſeat, and from between the two Cherubims*: But that place of Scripture does not explain the manner of that Communication, ſo as to determine it to a real Voice; much leſs does it exclude all former Revelations from that priviledg. Nay, nothing is more evident, than that other Revelations were made by a real Voice, before the delivery of the Law of *Moſes*. Immediately after the Fall (*Gen.* 9. 10.) we read, that *God called unto Adam, and ſaid unto him, Where art thou? And he ſaid, I heard thy Voice in the Garden, and I was afraid.* Or if our bold Author will turn this into Figure (as indeed he ventures to turn ſo whatſoever he pleaſes) yet in the 18th of *Geneſis*, we read of a Revelation made by a real Voice, or there is no deſcription of a real Voice in *rerum naturâ*; For the three Angels that appeared as Men to *Abraham*, and eat as Men, without doubt ſpake as Men, when the promiſe was made to *Abraham*, that *Sarah ſhould bring forth a Son.* When God was about to de-

deſtroy the Old World, *Gen.* 6. he foretold that diſmal Execution of Vengeance to his Servant *Noah*; and if you will ſtick to the Words of the Scripture, according to our firſt agreement, gave him a punctual deſcription of the *Ark* he ſhould make, and the Perſons and Living Creatures, that ſhould enter into it, which it is hard to imagine could be done without a real Voice; Or at leaſt, it is as rational to ſuppoſe one here, as in the place cited out of *Gen.* 25. 22. But your Author is ſtill more impudent or unwary, when he tells us it is evident from *Chron.* 22. that Revelation is ſometimes made by Images only, and that none are capable of receiving the revealed Will of God, but only by the help of Imagination; and that the Words or Figures were ſometimes real, that is, exiſting without the mind of the Prophet; and ſometimes imaginary, that is, framed by the mind of the Prophet himſelf. From whence he infers, That the Certainty of Prophecy is not Mathematical, but only Moral; or rather, according to thoſe Principles, nothing but a Fanciful Whimſey, that may as well be falſe or true. Now by this Author's leave, no ſuch concluſion; nor indeed can any concluſion at all be drawn from the Mediums of Divine Revelation, that concern the Certainty or Fallibility of it: For all

Quod Revelatio per ſolas imagines continget patet ex primo paralip. Ch. 22. v. p. 5. v. p. 3.

all the Mediums of Revelation being ſupernatural, we may call 'em by what Names we pleaſe; yet ſtill we muſt borrow thoſe Names from ſome Natural Things, becauſe of thoſe only we have compleat Idea's. He that is a Prophet, muſt be certain it is God who ſpeaks to him, but the bare hearing of a Voice, or the ſeeing of an Image, will not create this Certainty, according to the Laws of Nature: For Voices and Words may be framed by other inviſible Powers; and therefore we are not ſo fooliſh as to conclude, that *Moſes* was a Prophet of God, becauſe he heard a Voice, or ſaw a Figure, but becauſe he was enabled to ſhew forth ſenſible Demonſtrations, that the power of God was with him. But tho' we do not conclude the certainty of Revelation from the Mediums of Revelation, ſo is it the greateſt madneſs in the World, to infer from thence the Uncertainty of it: For we who have not ſeen thoſe Figures, nor heard thoſe Words, nor felt thoſe Divine Impreſſions, can frame no compleat Idea's of them. And your bold Author draws Concluſions from ſuch Premiſes, which 'tis plain he could never underſtand, unleſs he can pretend that himſelf has been inſpired. Suppoſing it therefore true, that the Scripture made mention of no other Mediums of Revelation than Signs, or Figures, &c. p. 7.

Preter hæc nulla alia ſingenda,

gures, and Words, yet cannot he from thence infer any Neceſſity of the Uncertainty of Divine Revelation, unleſs he could give us compleat Idea's of what manner of Impreſſions thoſe Words, or Signs, made upon the Minds of the Prophets; Which is a matter impoſſible for him to teach, or us to learn. One Man can inform another of his Mind, by Words and Figures, and why muſt God be excluded from that power which he gives his Creature? But after all, it is not true, that Words and Figures are the only Mediums of Divine Revelation, which the Scriptures mention. There is a Communication of the Spirit of God, immediately infuſing Knowledge into the Mind, without any Organs of Speech, or Corporeal Repreſentations; which yet is as infallible as the other. *Joh.* 16. 17. Our Saviour promiſes his Diſciples, *That the Spirit of Truth ſhould lead them into all Truth:* And this Communication of the Spirit we call *Inſpiration*, uſing a Metaphorical Word to expreſs a Notion, which we cannot poſſibly receive from the bare knowledge of Nature. And tho this Spirit appear'd to the Apoſtles, (*Acts* 2.) in the ſhape of *Cloven Tongues*, yet we read it beſtowed upon them, and upon others in the Primitive Times, the *Gift of Divers Languages*, before utterly unknown

unknown unto them, by a ſecret and inviſible Operation. If therefore the Spirit of God can reveal to the Mind of Man, without the help of thoſe Mediums, the ſignification of Words; why may it not alſo, after the ſame, or any other manner, communicate the certain knowledge of Things, which is all we contend for.

A. I wonder you will mention the Spirit of God, which our Author ſhews, is a Word of Various, and conſequently dubious ſignification. The Scripture-Phraſe, *That the Spirit of God is in the Prophets*; *That Men are filled with the Spirit of God*; and the like, does ſignifie no more, than that the Prophets were good Men, and that they perceiv'd the Will of God, as all Men (tho perhaps in a leſs degree, muſt needs do by the Light of Nature.) But all this is but the Imagination of the Prophet, conſidered with relation to the Apprehenſions of the Vulgar: And pray, Sir, what certainty is there in bare Imagination?

T. If by *Imagination* you underſtand the Power of the Mind, to receive, retain, or frame the Images of External Objects, it may be conſidered with relation to things preſent, paſt, or to come. External Objects, when preſent, impreſs ſuch Vivid Images upon the Brain, as will not ſuffer the Mind to doubt of their real Exiſtence. The ſame

Certainty

Certainty (tho ſomething ſhort of Infallibility,) is left upon the Mind, by Objects repreſented to the Senſes, when the Objects themſelves are paſt and gone. He that ſees an Horſe or Elephant preſent, by the Images impreſſed on the Brain, knows that they are preſent, and by reflecting on the ſame Images, the next day, he knows that they were preſent: And thus far Imagination is a certain Repoſitory of Knowledge; though not altogether infallible, becauſe through defect of the Organs, (as in Mad Men) the Images framed by the Mind it ſelf, are apprehended as exiſting without it; but thoſe who are in their Wits, are never impos'd upon by their Imaginations after that manner, as to think they hear Voices, when they hear none; or ſee Images of things, that are not near them. Men thus deluded by Imagination, always ſhew ſigns of the Diſtemper, in inconſiſtency of Thought, and wild Rovings of Expreſſion, which I defie any man to obſerve in the Writings of *Moſes* and the Prophets, tho ſome things therein are hard to be underſtood, and may ſeem uncouth to us, by reaſon of long diſtance of Times, Ignorance of the Cuſtoms, Hiſtories and Language of thoſe Times, and many other Reaſons, which I forbear to mention, as obvious enough without it. In ſhort, either God did

ſend

ſend Meſſages to his Servants the Prophets, by the viſible appearance of Angels, and ſpake to them in Voices, or their Imaginations fram'd all theſe Appearances to it ſelf, from the ſhatter'd Images of other External Objects. If the firſt of theſe is true, your Author very impertinently concludes the Uncertainty of Prophecy from the Uncertainty of Imagination; for that Faculty does faithfully enough receive and preſerve the Images of things really preſented to it; and herein the Certainty of Imagination differs not from the Certainty of our Senſes. If he means the latter; the Prophets then were no better than Pious Mad Men, and all the Sacred Writings are mere Fictions of the Mind, which owe all the little Truth that is in them, to meer Chance, which I perceive, however diſguiſed, is the genuine meaning of your admired Author. But if *Moſes* and the other Prophets, were diſtemper'd by a leſs Imagination, how comes it to paſs, that they are all ſo conſtant in the Doctrine of Piety? For I am ſure our Modern Mad Men (who are never conſiſtent with themſelves, or one another,) are very much different from his deſcription of the Ancients: Or how come their Predictions to be verified by the Event? Or how come the whole Nation of the *Jews* to be ſuch Fools as to follow Mad Men?

Men? Or how did such a Mad Man as *Moses*, attain the power of working Miracles, and of leading the Children of *Israel* through the Wilderness, and governing them with Prudence and Moderation? But if God himself made these Revelations to them, it is nonsense to infer any uncertainty for the Mediums God uses for the Work; For it is in his Power to create Certainty of Divine Revelation, without the help of Mediums, as in the case of Inspiration, or by whatsoever means he pleases, as those of Words or Figures.

A. You know very well, that the Mind can compound various Images, and thence conclude more Propositions than can be known by deductions from the sole Light of Reason; and thence it is the Prophets teach more of Religion than can be known by Nature only.

T. The true Reason is this; God knows more than Man, what is necessary to make him happy; and therefore those who are taught by God, can declare more concerning the means of Salvation, than those who are guided by the sole Light of Nature.

A. Well, still I have some Reason to think, that Prophecy was the pure Work of the Imagination. 1. The Prophets perceived and uttered all things by Parables and Riddles, expressing Spiritual things af-

ter a Corporal manner. 2. It was, as Imagination always is, very inconſtant, not adhering to the Prophet, but coming by fits and ſtarts, according to the unſteddy leaps of Fancy.

T. But I have better Reaſons to perſwade me, that your Author is in a moſt egregious error for futurities; *i. e.* things which neither are, nor have been, cannot make impreſſion upon the Fancy, according to the Laws of Nature, which may produce any tolerable degree of Certainty; and therefore when Futurities are foretold, which depend not upon any neceſſary connexion of natural cauſes, it muſt be aſſerted by the ſupernatural Power of God. The Mind may indeed be impos'd upon by help of the Imagination, ſeveral ways, in reſpect to things to come; as when from the remembrance of what is paſt, it concludes that the ſame will happen again, tho there be no neceſſary connexion between the Cauſe and the Effect: Or, (2.) When from its vaſt Magazine of Images, it chuſes out, and joyns thoſe together, which ought not to be joyned, and concludes their future Exiſtence, from an ill conceived Notion of their bare poſſibility of Being. And herein the Mind frequently impoſes upon its ſelf, by its own Paſſions and Deſires, concluding ſuch things will be, which it moſt deſires

ſhould come to paſs hereafter. But ſuch poſſible and impoſſible compoſitions of the Fancy, or concluſion of the deluded Reaſon of Mankind, are of ſo vaſt a number, that it is impoſſible all, or any great number of them ſhould prove true, without the Predictions were made by God himſelf. How could *Imagination*, out of thouſands of poſſible Circumſtances of our Saviour's Birth, pick out all thoſe by the Prophets, which would certainly come to paſs, as we can eaſily prove from *the holy Scriptures*? or how could it avoid predicting ſomething that was falſe, if it had only *probability* to work upon, which is the only Object of Fancy, in regard to future Events, which never made any impreſſion upon it? We therefore conclude the *certainty of Prophecy*, not from the Nature of Imagination, but from the knowledg and power that God has, to make whatſoever *impreſſions he pleaſes upon it*. And tho the *Prophets* frequently did perceive and ſpeak by *corporal repreſentations* of *ſpiritual matters*, that might very well be preſum'd to be done, in compliance to *the apprehenſions of the people*, who at that time were very ignorant, ſtanding more in need of *Milk* than of robuſter diet. And tho God did declare *his mind*, as one man may to another, by *Hieroglyphick Repreſentations*, yet thoſe never diſturb'd the Reaſon of the Prophet,

Prophet, nor cauſed him to entertain *groſs conceptions* of God. Fancy let looſe, makes ſuch a Medly of Religion, as may be found in the *Metamorphoſis* of *Ovid*, or the *Iliads* of *Homer*, or the *Remains* of *Orpheus*; but it cannot produce ſuch a regular Structure of Divine Doctrine, and ſo agreeable to Natural Religion, as is contain'd in the Law of *Moſes*, and the Goſpel of our bleſſed Saviour.

A. But why did they not prophecy always?

T. Why does not one man always ſpeak to another?

A. Becauſe Man is a free Agent, and can ſpeak to his Neighbour when he pleaſes, or can let it alone.

T. And ſo is God, who does not ſend all men to be *Meſſengers of his Will*, but ſome only, choſen out of Mankind for ſo great a work. Nor does he chuſe to ſpeak always to them, but at ſuch *times and ſeaſons as pleaſes him.*

A. What then do you conclude from this long diſcourſe?

T. I conclude, that ſince no Man can frame a compleat Idea of Prophetic Dream, or Viſion, or Inſpiration, who is not himſelf a Prophet, no Man can conclude any incertainty in Prophecy, from the mention the Scripture makes of thoſe *Mediums of Divine Revelation.*

A. I will consider what you say, and tell you my Opinion at our next meeting. Farewell.

Conference II.

T. SIR, You seem very much pleased: I hope you receiv'd some satisfaction by my last discourse.

A. It bore some Face of Reason at first appearance, but my Author has furnished me with some *New Objections*, which I fear, with all your *Priest-craft*, you will never be able to answer. You talk of *Prophets*, as
p. 15. Great Men inspired by God, when it is evident, that their Minds were as far inferior to other Mens, as Reason is superior to Fancy. *Solomon* was a wise man, but no Prophet. We must not therefore seek the knowledg either of human or divine things from the *Writings of Prophets*, *i. e.* of Men led by Fancy, but *Philosophers*, who are guided by Reason.

T. That is, from Men taught by themselves, and not taught by God.

A. If a man was sure that these *Prophets were taught by God*, he would desire to have no

no better *Maſters*: But alas! they were not certain of their own Inſpiration, by the Revelation it ſelf, but ſome other *little ſign*, adapted to their human Education, Opinion, or pre-conceiv'd knowledg.

T. If they perceiv'd the Will of God by Imagination (which are the words of your Author), and yet remain'd doubtful of it, then it follows either that God was not willing, or not able to give them aſſurance that himſelf ſpake to them. If you ſay, he was not willing, you contradict the *Teſtimonies of Scripture*, by which you pretend at firſt you would be judged, and you ſubvert all Fundamentals of Natural Religion, which teaches nothing more plainly, than that *God cannot deceive*. If you ſay, he was willing, but not able, yon muſt deny him to have that power, which is not only contain'd in the Idea of a Deity, but manifeſted in the other *works of his hands*. The *Prophets* therefore doubted not but it was God who ſpake to them, tho they *ſometimes required a ſign*, to confirm the truth of ſome Promiſe made to their Poſterity; as *Gen.* 15. 8. where *Abraham* required not a ſign, that he might be certain it was God that ſpake to him (for if he had not been well aſſured of that, we cannot think he would have left his Father's houſe, to ſojourn in *Canaan*, in Obedience to a Divine Command, as we *Act.* 7. 3.

read in the 12th Chap.) but that he might thereby assure his Posterity of the Promise, to engage them to a nearer and stricter Covenant with their God. Or perhaps *Abraham* was desirous by some farther Revelation, accompany'd by a sign, to know something more particular concerning the Time, and other *Circumstances*, of *his Posterity's Conquest of the Land of Canaan*, which God vouchsafed to give him, as we read in the latter part of the same chap. But your Author trifles, when he infers from this 15th ch. of *Gen.* that the *Patriarch required a sign, that he might be certain the Promise was made by God himself*; since it is evident from v. 6. that *he believed in God, and it was accounted unto him for righteousness*, before the sign there mentioned was given to him. As for *Judges* 6. we read, that *Gideon was inform'd by an Angel, in the shape of a Man, that he should free Israel from the Midianitish slavery, of which at first he doubted; but after the consumption of the food he brought by fire, and the disappearance of the heavenly Minister, he perceived it was an Angel of God.* But what is this to your Author's purpose? Suppose the certainty of one or two *Revelations* depended upon a sign, does it thence follow, as he wildly concludes, *that no Prophet could be sure of a Divine Revelation without a sign*? Do we not read of *many Divine Revelations*,

of

of the truth of which the *Prophets* never doubted, wherein there was no ſign given, but the certainty aroſe from the perſpicuity of the Revelation it ſelf. God does not confine himſelf to any one way of ſpeaking to Mankind, but (*Heb.* 1. 1.) *in diverſe manners ſpake in time paſt unto the Fathers by the Prophets.* Sometimes indeed, as in this inſtance of *Gideon*, the perſon to whom God by his *Angel* appeared, was not at firſt certain that it was God, till by further illumination, and repeated *ſigns and wonders*, he was ſuffered no longer to doubt of it. When *Moſes* firſt ſaw the *Buſh burning with fire, and the Buſh not conſumed, he turned aſide to behold it*, as a ſtrange ſight; and when *God ſent his Angels to* Abraham, *he took them at firſt ſight for Men, and made accordingly proviſion for their reception*; and when *God called twice unto* Samuel, *he ſuppoſed it was the voice of Ely:* And yet he made afterwards ſuch manifeſtation of himſelf, to *Moſes*, and thoſe other good men, that they wanted no ſign to be themſelves aſſured of his preſence, but rather to convict others, that they were ſent by God. We don't ſay, that God, by every *appearance of an Angel to the Sons of Men*, darted an infallible certainty into their *Minds*, that left no room for *ſuſpicion*, but that he could do ſo whenſoever he pleaſed, as is evident by Reaſon; and that

Numb. 3. *Act.* 7. 30.

See *Exod.* 4. 2, 8, 9, 14. ver.

he did frequently do ſo, as is no leſs plain from the *Scriptures*; and that he added ſometimes *Signs*, for the ſatisfaction of thoſe to whom the *Revelations* were made, (for, with the *Jews*, we will not call them all *Prophets*), and ſometimes he added none, when the perception was clear enough without it.

A. Is not *Natural Reaſon* ſuperior then to *Revelation*, ſince that is ſupported by *Signs*, and the other perſpicuous enough without it?

T. The conſequence is vain and fallacious. The ſubſtance of the *Decalogue* is plainly true by the light of Nature, yet it was confirmed to the *Jews* by *Signs and Wonders*, at its moſt remarkable promulgation, *Exod.*20. God therefore by confirming Natural Light by *Signs and Wonders*, according to your Author, did that which was ſuperfluous. As if the unlearned, obſtinate, or unthinking part of the people of *Iſrael*, ſtood in no need of being rous'd up as it were to *Natural Duties*, by *Supernatural Signs and Wonders*: Or as if the *Decalogue*, by addition of *Miracles*, became inferior to the very ſame *Laws*, without any ſuch addition, which is altogether as true as that 4 and 2 is leſs than 4. As for *Duties* which are known by *Revelation only*, (ſuch as *Circumciſion*, *Baptiſm* and *Supper of our Lord*) when once

once they are made known, by *ſupernatural methods*, they no ways give place to the unwritten Law of Nature, becauſe they become *branches* of that general Obedience to God, which is the adequate Law of human Nature. When God bid *Abraham* ſacrifice his Son, he was as much obliged to kill him, as he was obliged before that Command to preſerve his Life.

S. I won't diſpute with you about *ſmall matters*, but this is evident, that *Signs* were given to the *Prophets*, according to their pre-conceiv'd Opinions, and their different Capacities: ſo that the ſame ſign which render'd one Prophet certain of divine Revelation, would have wrought no ſuch effect upon another. If their Temper was ſanguine, they fancied nothing but *Triumphs, Victories, Meſſiahs, Peace and Plenty:* If their blood was vitiated with melancholy humors, they dream'd of *Wars, Tumults, Blood and Devaſtations.* p. 18.

L. The ſign was, for the moſt part, the power of working ſome ſupernatural effect, given to the Prophet, to convince rather others, than himſelf, that he was ſent by God, and delivered his Meſſage to the people; and becauſe all Mankind have not the ſame temperature of body, nor labour under the ſame *prejudices of Education*, nothing can be a ſufficient ſign, but what is ſo far above

above the ordinary works of Nature, that Men of all *Temperatures*, and all *Opinions* too, if they are in their Senſes, muſt needs confeſs, that *it is the immediate work of a ſuperior inviſible power*. Upon this Foundation we raiſe the certainty of the *Moſaick*, and of the *Chriſtian Religion*; Let any man, of what *Temperature*, and poſſeſs'd with what *Prejudices* you pleaſe, provided he be not ſtark mad, (for *Bethlem* is to be excluded from all *Diſputations*) conſider what *Moſes* did in the ſight of all the *Egyptians*, and the people of *Iſrael*, and what our Saviour did in all parts of *Judea*, and let him then perſwade himſelf, or others, that all this was done, or poſſible to be done, by the ordinary courſe and power of Nature. If he can do that, we will yeild our Cauſe, and confeſs our Religion was never confirmed by *Signs* from Heaven; for Effects that may be, or may not be Natural, may be ſome *Indications*, but *no Demonſtrations of a ſuperior inviſible power*. The truth is, the Sparks of your Principles, were never, I believe, ſo mad as to confeſs the *truth of all thoſe mighty works*, recorded to have been done by *Moſes* and the *Prophets*, or our *Saviour* himſelf, and yet doubt of their divine Miſſion; for I preſume every man who believes our Saviour to have *raiſed himſelf*, or *others from the Grave*, muſt neceſſarily

believe

believe his *divine Miſſion:* And as for the *minor Prophets*, their *Meſſages* being of *leſs extent*, and *leſs conſequence to mankind*, there was no neceſſity that all of them ſhould have their *Commiſſion ſign'd from Heaven*, and *recorded to poſterity*, by the ſame number and perſpicuity of *ſupernatural Wonders*, as was that of *Moſes*, and of our bleſſed Saviour. Your Author therefore very impudently, and ignorantly too, aſſerts, *that the Sign was adapted to the Temperature, or Opinion, or Imagination of the Prophet*; when it was always ſome ſupernatural work, adapted to convince the Reaſon of all Mankind, and impoſſible to be gain-ſay'd by any.

S. Did not *Eliſha* call for a Muſical In-p. 19. ſtrument, before he could foretel joyful things to *Jehoram*, and his two Confederates? which he could not do before, becauſe *he was angry at him*, 2*King*.3.15. *Ezekiel* being impatient of Life, was enabled to foretel dreadful tidings to the *Jewiſh* Nation, *Ez*.3.14. *Jeremiah* was a melancholy, and conſequently a continual Meſſenger of Evil to his brethren; *Micah* troubled with the ſame diſeaſe, always propheſied dreadful Events to *Ahab*; which plainly ſhews, that *Prophecy did much depend upon the natural Temperature of the body.*

L. No more than my ſending a merrily diſpos'd Servant upon an Errand, does ſhew that

that my Errand was an effect of the ſanguine complexion of my Servant's Body. God, who knows the Diſpoſition and Temperature of all human Bodies, may chuſe thoſe that are beſt adapted for each particular Meſſage he ſends to Mankind; but that is no Argument, that the Meſſage it ſelf is any effect of their *natural diſpoſition*. For we are not ſo mad as to believe theſe Men were inſpired, becauſe they ſpake of *things agreeable to their own humours*, but *things above the reach of humane knowledge*. *Eliſha* might diſpel ſome melancholy Fumes, by the harmony of Muſick, but I would feign know the Name of that Muſical Inſtrument, which could inſpire his mind with the knowledge of thoſe two futurities. 1. *That the ditches ſhould be filled with water, without any preceeding rain.* 2. *That the* Iſraelites *ſhould overcome their Enemies.*

Vid. ver. 17, 18.

Moſes was angry with *Pharaoh*, when he foretold the deſtruction of all the firſt born of *Egypt*, but it was not *his Anger*, but God himſelf, or one of his *Angels*, that *at midnight ſmote all the firſt born of the land of Egypt*, *Ex.* 12.20. *Micah* always propheſied Evil to *Ahab*, becauſe *Ahab* always was an ill man, and there was evil decreed againſt him by God, which accordingly came to paſs, not by *Micah*'s *indignation*, but *by the juſt Judgment of God*. If theſe mens predictions had been

been an effect of bodily temper, (and if your Author ſays not that, he ſays not one word to the purpoſe) they muſt frequently have been proved falſe by the Event: For Truth is ſeldom ſeen, much leſs foreſeen, by thoſe who ſpeak and act according to the unſteady motions of bodily temper. Beſides, it is clearer than the Light, that theſe *inſpired Authors did not propheſie*, as your Author inſinuates, *according to their own Inclinations*, but according to what they received from the Spirit of God. The *Scriptures* bear witneſs, that *Moſes* was a very *meek man*; and therefore, according to your Author's ſilly *Hypotheſis*, all *Revelations* proceeding through him, ſhould have been full of nothing but *Meekneſs and Gentleneſs*, and the Sanctions ſhould have conſiſted chiefly of alluring promiſes; and yet we Read in *Exod.* 20. *That the Law of* Moſes *was delivered in a terrible manner, by Thunder and Lightning in the Mount.* And *Deut.* 28. 15. *Moſes* utters ſo many Curſes againſt the tranſgreſſor of the Law, as muſt needs proceed from ſomething very much different from the deſcription he gives of his own meek and gentle Spirit. *Elijah* will be allowed by your Author, to have been a perſon of a fierce diſpoſition, as may be ſeen by his *calling for Fire down from Heaven, upon the Captains of Fifties,*

and

and killing the Worſhippers of Baal; and from our Saviour's Rebuke to his Diſciples, when they would have had him call down for *Fire from Heaven*, after *Elijah*'s Example, *Ye know not what manner of ſpirit ye are of*: and yet not onely ſo, but he was incenſed againſt *Ahab*, by provocations of the higheſt Nature, becauſe by his and *Jezebels* command, (1 *King*. 19. 14.) *The Children of* Iſrael *had forſaken the Covenant of his God, thrown down his Altars, and Slain his Prophets with the Sword, and he onely was left, and they ſought his Life alſo.* Nay, *Ahab* had made up the meaſure of his iniquity, by depriving *Naboth* of his Vineyard, and his Life, yet when the word of the Lord came to *Elijah* the *Tiſhbite*, he became the Meſſenger of good News to *Ahab*, 1 *King*. 21. 29. *Seeſt thou how* Ahab *humbleth himſelf before me? becauſe he humbleth himſelf before me, I will not bring the Evil in his Days.* *Iſaiah* was undoubtedly a Perſon of a very Sweet and Aimable temper, of a Noble Family, and well practiſed in all the Arts and Language of a flouriſhing Court, as this *A*---well enough obſerves from that flowing vein of Eloquence which runs through all his Writings; and his Prophecy is ſo full of Promiſes of good things to the Church, that he is ſtiled, *the Evangelical Prophet*; and yet he was

ſent

ſent by God as a Meſſenger of ill News, even to the good *Hezekiah*. *Iſ.* 39. 6. *Behold the days come, when all that is in thy houſe, and that which thy Fathers laid up in ſtore until this day, ſhall be carry'd to Babylon, nothing ſhall be left, ſaith the Lord.* And if any man read ch. 53. of his Prophecy, he will find ſuch a de- *Iſa.* 53. ſcription of a ſuffering Meſſiah, as could not have enter'd into the Head of ſuch an accompliſh'd Courtier, without the aſſiſtance of divine Inſpiration. *Jeremiah* was a man of ſorrow, and yet your Author cannot ſay, that none but Revelation of ſorrowful things were made to him, for he foretold the Reſtauration of the *Jews*, and the preciſe time of it, which certainly was no very ſorrowful matter. I could heap up innumerable inſtances of the ſame Nature, to ſhew your Authors Foundation he would build upon, (*Viz.* That Propheſie was adapted, to the Natural temper of the Prophet, from whence he would undoubtedly inſinuate, it was onely an effect of it) is falſe, and repugnant to the United Teſtimonies of the Holy Scriptures. Beſides, who could inform this Temerarious Author of the Natural Conſtitution of the Bodies of the Ancient Prophets? Who knows not that the humours of the Body, are much alter'd, both for the better and the worſe, by External accidents, whether

ſad,

ſad, or joyful. What wonder then that thoſe Prophets who liv'd in the Peaceable and Flouriſhing State of the Church, as *Iſaiah* did for ſome time, and to whom joyful things were for the moſt part reveal'd, ſhould be of a joyful Spirit, and the contrary be recorded of theſe, who were ſent upon ſad and mournful Meſſages? Which is moſt likely, that the meſſage ſhould be cauſe of the Joy? Or the Joy be the cauſe of the meſſage?

S. To me, the Scales ſeem to hang even.

L. But then, are thoſe predictions, whether Joyous, or Mournful, Prov'd always to be trne by the event? I hope that is enough to turn the Scale on the Prophets ſide.

S. You may ſay what you pleaſe, but ſtill you ſhall never make me believe, but that if God ſpake to Man, he would always ſpeak in the ſame Style, and that Style would be the moſt elegant and florid of any other. But if you compare the firſt of *Iſaiah* from Ver. 11. to 20. with the 5th of *Amos*, from 21 to 24 *ver. &c.* You will find that the Style of the Prophets is not always the ſame, but according to their ſeveral capacities; it is ſometimes brief, and ſometimes long; ſometimes elegant, and ſometimes rude; in ſome places very plain, and in others full of obſcurity.

L.

L. Difference of Stile is no Argument of *difference in things*, nor is *the Elegance*, or *Rudeneſs of a Language*, eſſential to the conveyance of Truth. The Hiſtory of *Saluſt* is as true as that of *Livy*; for he wrote of things done in his own time; whereas *Livy* is full of *fabulous Relations*; and yet I never p. 20. heard any *Critick* affirm, *That his Stile is as compleat and elegant.* It is enough for us to believe, *that God revealed his Will to the Prophets, and other inſpired Authors, but left the Narration to the natural Abilities of the Prophets*, whoſe Stile might vary, but not *their conceptions of the will of God.*

S. But why then did he not always chuſe Men of the moſt *elegant Stile* to be *his Prophets.*

L. Becauſe it being intended for the *good of all Mankind*, it ought to be adapted to the *meaneſt Capacities.* As men of great, natural and acquired Abilities, were fitteſt to ſtand before Kings and Princes, ſo were *Ruſticks* and *illiterate perſons* moſt fit to ſpeak to the *capacity of the Vulgar.*

S. Well, I will grant, *that difference of Stile* is no very material Objection; but what if *the Hierogliphicks*, and *Prophetical Repreſentations* were various alſo? Did not *Iſaiah ſee God ſitting upon a Throne high and lifted up, and his Train filled the Temple, Iſ. 6.* But *Ezekiel beheld him as a fire, of the colour*

of Amber. Is it not plain, that *both ſaw God in the ſame manner, as their reſpective imagination did before the Viſion repreſent him to them?*

L. Not in the leaſt: All that the Scripture ſays, is, *That God made himſelf known by thoſe different Repreſentations* to *Iſaiah* and *Ezekiel*; does it therefore follow, that they made *theſe Repreſentations to themſelves, out of their own Fancy*? If theſe *Hieroglyphicks* were really repreſented to them by God, what neceſſity was there, that they ſhould be adapted to *erroneous prejudices of the Prophet*? Such *Revelations* would be productive of Error, and God would thereby become *the Author, Abetter, and Confirmer of Falſhood in the World*; which none will affirm, but thoſe who think God to be nothing elſe but the ſetled courſe of dull and ſtupid matter. If the heat of their own Imagination coined theſe *Images* to its ſelf, then *Iſaiah* and *Ezekiel* were perfectly mad men, and *their writings* no more worthy to be preſerv'd, than *the rambling diſcourſes of the Inhabitants of Bedlam.* Nay, admitting this, they muſt be preſum'd to have been the *greateſt Fools* of all the *Jewiſh Nation.* For, how could men inſtructed in the *Moſaick Law*, which forbids *all corporal Repreſentations of God*, becauſe they ſaw *no ſimilitude of him in the Mount*, frame ſuch *groſs conceptions*

ptions

ptions of God, as of a *King ſitting upon a Throne*, or a *flaming fire*? Or if they uſed to fancy God after that manner, how does it come to paſs their writings are not tarniſhed by ſuch *groſs conceptions*, but that in them we find clear Notions of *his ſpiritual and incomprehenſible Nature*?

S. Ay, but *the Revelations to the Prophets* did vary not only in *the manner*, but in *the perſpicuity of the Revelation its ſelf*. Thoſe made to *Zachariah* were ſo obſcure, that without an Explication they could not be underſtood by that very Prophet. And *Daniel* could not underſtand *his*, when *they were explained by an Angel to him*. Why therefore ſhould we trouble our Heads with *the Writings of thoſe Men*, who ſcarce knew what they wrote themſelves?

L. He is a *Prophet* that certainly knows that God ſpeaks to him in a *ſupernatural manner*: of this *Iſaiah*, *Ezekiel*, *Daniel*, nor any of thoſe doubted, whom the *Jewiſh Church* receiv'd as *Prophets*. As for *the Subject-matter of their Prophecy*, it was not ne- p 20.
ceſſary that *the Prophet* ſhould underſtand all that was incloſed in that, much leſs that he ſhould perceive it by the firſt View of the *Hieroglyphical Repreſentations*, till *inform'd of the matter by an Angel ſent from God*: For he being only a Meſſenger from God, it is neceſſary he ſhould be certain

that it is God that ſends him; but 'tis not equally neceſſary that he ſhould *always underſtand the whole Subject-matter of his* Meſſage. For even *Temporal Monarchs* ſend inclos'd Inſtructions by their Ambaſſadors; and ſince the Meſſage it ſelf did not ſo much concern the *Prophet*, as ſome part or Age of the *Catholick Church*; and therefore it was enough for him to deliver the *Meſſage* faithfully, as *he receiv'd it*, without Explaining all that is hard to be underſtood therein: And yet after all, the *Scripture* only ſays, *That the Angel explained the Hieroglyphicks to Daniel, and that Daniel fainted and was ſick, and his thoughts much troubled him, perhaps by contemplation of thoſe many Evils that were to befall his people.*

Dan. 7. 28. *and* 8. 27.

S. O you miſtake the matter; for we read, *ch.* 11.14. *That the Angel came on purpoſe to make Daniel underſtand what ſhould befall his people in the latter days — And the matter ſtill remained obſcure, becauſe none at that time had ſtrength enough to imagine ſuch a wonderful buſineſs.*

Chap. 21.

L. This ſeems to me to be one of the moſt abſurdeſt aſſertions that *ever dropt from the Pen of an Author pretending to Reaſon.* For, 1. *It ſets bounds to the power of God, as if he was willing, but not able to declare his mind to* Daniel, *nor to any of that are, with plainneſs and perſpicuity ſuitable to the Subject.* 2. *It*

ſuppoſes

ſuppoſes ſtrength of Imagination to hear a real voice, which is a new ſtroke of Philoſophy. 3. *It ſuppoſes* Daniel *able to hear ſome words of the Angel, but not all that concern'd his people, as if the Angel was ſo ſhort-breath'd, as not to be able to tell out all the ſtory, or* Daniel *ſo weak in his capacity, that it was beyond the power of God himſelf to enable him to underſtand the matter.*

S. I cannot conceive, but that if *the Prophets had been taught of God,* they muſt have *known all things* ; but we ſee the Author of *Joſhua*'s Hiſtory Erroneouſly apprehended *the Sun to turn round the Earth* ; whereas all *modern Virtuoſo's* agree, *that the Earth turns round the Sun. Solomon* underſtood not *the true proportion between the Periphery, and Diametre of the Circle.* Nay, I can ſhew you, from the *teſtimonies of the very Scriptures, That the Prophets had very vulgar and erroneous Apprehenſions of God himſelf.*

L. If you can make out that laſt thing, I will acknowledge you ſpeak much to the purpoſe.

S. Adam apprehended God *as ignorant of what he had done, and hid himſelf from him* ; which ſhews, he had no other Notion of him, than *his being the Creator of the World.* In the ſame manner was God revealed to *Cain* and *Lamech, as ignorant of Humane Affairs.* And it appears from *Gen.* 18. 4. *A-*

braham knew not that God was an Omnipreſent and Omniſcient Being.

L. Did God tell *Adam*, or *Cain*, or *Lamech, that he was only the Maker of the World, but ignorant of Humane Affairs.*

S. No.

L. How then can God be ſaid to *be revealed as thus ignorant, unto them*, when it is Evident *their ignorance preceeded the Divine Revelation*, and was not occaſion'd by it? We do not ſay, *that inſpired Authors knew all things*; for *Omniſcience* is an *incommunicable Attribute of God*; much leſs, *that they knew all things before God was pleaſed to reveal his mind unto them*; but, *that they had an infallible certainty, that God did ſpeak to 'em, and that whatſoever he ſaid was true.* As for your Suppoſition, *That* Adam *knew God only as the Creator of the World*; it is almoſt as much as to ſay, *Adam knew God only, as he knew all that is to be known of him.* For the *viſible things* of the Creation, make known an inviſible power of Godhead. We cannot ſuppoſe *Adam* could know, that himſelf and the whole world was made by a ſuperior Being, and yet at the ſame time not know, that *this ſuperiour Being was endued with Wiſdom, Goodneſs and Power.* Nay, ſo far is it from Truth, that *Adam*, when *he hid himſelf in the Garden*, only knew God *as Maker of the World*; that he had *received a*

Command

Command from him *as Lawgiuer*, at the very moment, for ought we know, of *his Creation*, Gen. 2.16,17. *And the Lord commanded the man, ſaying, Of every Tree of the Garden thou mayeſt freely eat — But of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, thou ſhalt not eat of it; for in the day thou eateſt thereof, thou ſhalt ſurely die.* If therefore *Adam* apprehended not God *as Omniſcient and Omnipreſent*, he needed not have hid *himſelf from him*; for he was pretty ſure, *that God did not with bodily Eyes behold him taking the Forbidden Fruit*; but *his Fear, Amazement* and *Confeſſion*, without doubt, aroſe from the Notion he had of *his inviſible Power and Godhead*. For *Omniſcience* and *Omnipreſence* are inſeperably intervoven into the very Notion of a God, as *he is Creator of the World*. For the Firſt Cauſe muſt be united to every Effect; otherwiſe there would be an *Effect without a Cauſe*; and *this Firſt Cauſe* muſt know *this Union*; otherwiſe it would act by *chance*; from whence it unavoidably follows, *That if the firſt Cauſe know any thing, it muſt know all things, ſince all things have a like dependance upon it*. Tho *the Scripture* therefore repreſents God, *as walking in the Garden*, &c. Yet this may well be underſtood of ſome Angel ſent by God upon that meſſage, it being familiar with the Scriptures to a-

ſcribe ſome things to God, which were apparently done by the Miniſtry of his *Holy Angels* —— Nor does it follow, that *Adam* thought God to be ignorant of humane Affairs, becauſe he endeavoured to *hide himſelf from him*; For all *Fear*, and eſpecially that which has *Guilt for its Parent*, is apt in its own Nature, to diſorder Mens *Reaſon*, and to make them do abſurd things, for which no ſufficient Reaſon can be given. If a man for *Fear*, whether *real* or *imaginary*, ſhould, to avoid the *Sword of his Enemy*, throw himſelf down a *precipitating Rock*, into *the Waves of the Sea*, or run into *the Flames of a devouring Fire*, it does not follow, that this man thought *that the Water could not drown, nor the Fire burn, nor the Rock daſh him to peices*; but we may rather conclude, *that the imagination of ſome impending danger, made ſuch violent impreſſions upon his Brain, as for the preſent drove thence the uſe of clear and impartial Reaſon. Adam* was ſenſible of *Guilt*, and *the Fear of Puniſhment* threw him into *abſurd and ridiculous meaſures to eſcape it*; but we muſt not aſcribe that to *his Reaſon*, which was manifeſtly an *Effect of his Fear and Terror*. Beſides, whatever your *Author* obſerves of *the Ignorance of Adam*, or *Cain*, &c. reflects nor Diminution upon *revealed Light*, but rather upon his *adored Light of Nature*. For if *Adam*

dam thought God was not *Omniſcient* or *Omnipreſent*, it was becauſe *the Light of Reaſon* gave him no truer a Notion of a God. Your *Author* indeed would inſinuate, *That God was revealed to him as ignorant of Humane Affairs*; but then it muſt be in ſome *Bible* that lies under *the Author's ſole poſſeſſion*; for no ſuch thing is mentioned in any of thoſe which I have hitherto ſeen in the World.

S. But was not God *revealed as ignorant of Humane Affairs* to *Cain*, when he ask'd him, (*Gen.*10.8.) *Where is Abel thy brother?*

L. No: the direct contrary is more apparent: for when *Cain* deny'd *the Murther*, in a very ſurly Dialect, viz. *Am I my Brother's Keeper?* He was made to underſtand, *that tho his Murther was hid perhaps from Man, it was open to the ſight of God.*

S. But does not *his Queſtion* ſuppoſe he *thought otherwiſe?*

L. Wicked Men may think as they pleaſe; but *their thoughts* throw leſs Aſperſion upon *revealed Light*, than they do upon the *Light of Nature*. *Cain* committed *Murther* upon *Abel*, will your *Author* therefore conclude, *that God was revealed to* Cain *as approving Murther?* or *that Murther is agreeable to the Light of Nature?* And yet *Cain*'s ſpeaking againſt *Natural Light*, in ſeeming to diſown *the Omniſcience of God*, is

no

no more an Argument, *that he thought God not to be Omniſcient*, than *the killing his brother*, was an Argument, *that he thought God to be a lover of Injuſtice, or an approver of the ſhedding of innocent blood.* Wicked men will corrupt *their natural Notions of moral good and evil*, as well as *the more ſpeculative Idea's of the Attributes of God*; but all that we can conclude from thence, is *the neceſſity of Divine Revelation*, to prevent *Atheiſm*, *Deiſm* and *Idolatry*, or *Polytheiſm*; and to enſure the moſt binding Sanctions of *Rewards and Puniſhments*, upon *the immutable Laws of Nature.*

S. Some Men will deny *Motion*, when *their Tongues* are running ſo faſt, that no Man can be *heard but themſelves.* Was not *Abraham* ignorant, that God was *Omnipreſent* and *Omniſcient*, when he begg'd of him *not to execute his Sentence of Vengeance, till he knew whether all were worthy of that puniſhment, or no*? And does not God himſelf ſpeak thus (at leaſt in the Imagination of *Abraham*,) *Gen.*18.20. *Becauſe the Cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and becauſe their ſin is very grievous, I will go down and ſee whether they have done altogether according to the Cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I ſhall know.*

L. Abraham's words to God, viz. *Peradventure there be Fifty righteous in the City,* con-

contain no more than a Petition, *that God would ſpare a great number of wicked perſons, for the ſake of a few righteous therein*; He does not preſume, that God did not know how many righteous there were there, but he prays, *that if Fifty were found, all the wicked might for their ſakes eſcape their intended deſtruction.* In v. 20. we have an Aſſertion, *That God had knowledge of the ſin of Sodom, for the Cry was great before him.* And what we read, v. 20. of *God's deſcending to know whether it was ſo or no*, is but the continuation of a *Metaphor* drawn from the like Actions in Men; a *Figure* us'd in moſt *Authors*, and not unfrequent in *the holy Scriptures*; where we often read of *his Hand, his Arm*, or *his Eyes*; and yet the *Jews* were never ſo ſtupid as to worſhip God under the *Sculpture* of any ſuch *Corporeal Repreſentations.*

S. If you would read the 3d and 4th Chapters of *Exodus* impartially, you would find, that *Moſes* himſelf had no adequate Notion of a God: For God was reveal'd to him, as ignorant of humane Actions. For tho God told him, Chap. 3. *v.* 28. *That the People of* Iſrael *would hearken to his Voice*; Moſes, Chap. 4. v. 1. Anſwer'd, *Behold they will not believe me, nor hearken to my Voice, for they will ſay, the Lord hath not appeared unto thee.*

L.

L. Believing, being an Act of the underſtanding and the will, jointly co-operating together, none but God can foreſee, which way the will of Man, when left to its Native liberty, will incline it ſelf. As for Men, they can onely make probable Conjectures of it, from reaſon and experience in humane Affairs : But *Moſes* could not conceive from either of theſe, how it was likely, or poſſible, that the children of *Iſrael* ſhould believe him upon his bare word, that he was ſent by God to deliver them from *Egyptian Slavery*; his aſſertion therefore, *Behold they will not believe me,* proceeded not from his ignorance of the Nature of God, but from his knowledge of the manners of Men, and eſpecially the children of *Iſrael*, who, he eaſily conjectur'd, would not believe him, without a Miracle, nor indeed, was it at all reaſonable that they ſhould have been ſo Prodigal of their aſſent, to one that had no Commiſſion ſign'd from Heaven, by the Power of working Signs and Wonders. But how does his ſuing for the Power of Miracles, at all argue that he had no true Notion of God? Or how do errors (provided they were ſuch, tho indeed they were not) occaſioned by the deficiency of Natural Light, reflect any Aſperſion upon the plenitude of Divine Re-

Revelation? For whatever *Moſes* might ſay to God, we don't read that God ever ſaid unto *Moſes*, that he was ignorant of humane Actions. Some Divines indeed, who with your Author pretend to the higheſt adoration of humane reaſon, have aſſerted, that God is ignorant of thoſe future contingents, which depend upon the free will of Man, and if this be true, *Moſes*, interpreted by your Author, had as true a Notion of God, as many of the Ancient Philoſophers, or ſome of the Modern *Arminians*, *Socinians*, and Preiſts themſelves, tho it is clear by the Holy Scriptures, that God by his Prophets has foretold thoſe Actions, which depend upon the free will of Man.

S. And is this all you have to ſay?

L. No, I will add, that tho God had told *Moſes*, ver. 18. of the 3d Chapter, *That the Children of* Iſrael *would hearken to his Voice*, Yet at the ſame time, he inform'd him, ver. 20. *That he would ſtretch out his Arm, and Smite* Egypt *with all his Wonders*. The Words therefore of *Moſes*, *Behold they will not believe me, nor hearken to my Voice, imply no contradiction to thoſe words of God himſelf*, v. 18. Chap. 3. Becauſe they relate to a different time. It was true, what God told *Moſes*, that the children of *Iſrael* would hearken to his Voice,

Voice, when it was confirm'd by Signs and Wonders, which were wrought in the Land of *Egypt*, and it was true, what *Moſes* ſaid to God, that they would not believe him, nor hearken to his Voice, before thoſe Signs and Wonders were wrought before them. It does not appear from hence, that *Moſes* doubted of the *Knowledge of God*, but only longed for that aſſiſtance of his Power, by which God had told him, *he would free the Iſraelites from the ſlavery of Bondage and Error*. Beſides, (*Ex.* 4.8.) God was revealed to *Moſes*, as foreknowing, that tho the *Iſraelites might at firſt deſpiſe, yet at laſt they would hearken to the voice of Moſes*.

S. All this ſeems to me, to be nothing but Evaſion. *Moſes* himſelf had wrong Notions of the Nature of God. He look'd upon him as a Being, that always was, is, and ever ſhall be, and for that reaſon call'd him *Jehovah*, but he taught nothing of his Nature, but that he was Merciful, Living, and very Jealous of Tranferring his Honour to another. p. 24.

L. If *Moſes* conceived no right notion of a God, Pray let us know your Authors Opinion upon that Subject.

S. My Author gives no Definitions, but it is plain from the 26th page, that he look's upon *Moſes* Conceptions of Love, and Mercy,

Mercy, and Jealouſy, (which are humane paſſions) when aſcribed to God, to be very erroneous, mean, and vulgar.

L. They cannot be conceived erroneous, unleſs you can prove, that *Moſes* thereby aſcribes ſomething to God, that is imperfect, or vicious in its own Nature, which I preſume you will never be able to do. Love, as it is a humane paſſion, may be vicious when placed upon a wrong object, as when we love thoſe things which are forbidden, or when it is too remiſs, or too vehement, in reſpect of thoſe objects upon which it is placed: But as it is a Principle of doing Good, and Fruitful of Beneficial Emanations to Men and Angels, it is the Perfection and Glory of the Divine Nature, in ſo much that the Apoſtle is not affraid to ſay, that God is Love it ſelf.

S. But what think you of Pity, Mercy, Jealouſy, are thoſe paſſions worthily aſcribed unto God?

L. Yes, very worthily, provided you remove from thence thoſe imperfections, which unavoidably ariſe from the Nature of a humane Soul, and the contexture of a humane body. All our Affections are accompany'd with ſome violent perturbation of the body, which cannot be in God, who is an incorporeal Being. Wherefore

tho

tho Pity, Jealouſy and Anger be attributed to God, for want of proper and intelligible Names to expreſs ſomething that is like them in the Divine Nature; yet we cannot conceive *Moſes* ſo ſtupid, as to think that God felt the ſame perturbations that Men are ſenſible of in their afflictions. The *Scripture* repreſents God as reſolved to puniſh unrepenting ſinners; and this Reſolution it calls *his Anger*; and it ſhews us, that God is ready to ſuccour the afflicted, and to extend his Pardon to ſome, who according to ſtrict Juſtice are unworthy of it; and his Propenſity to thoſe voluntary Favours *Moſes* calls by the Name of *Mercy*: and his Eternal Decree, *That his Honour ſhould not be given to his Creatures*, by an eaſy Metaphor is ſtiled *Jealouſy*. But all this includes no Erroneous Apprehenſions of God, it onely expreſſes theſe attributes which are known by the light of Nature, in ſuch words as are moſt intelligible to all the different Degrees of Men in the World.

S. You may fancy what Figures you pleaſe, but can you ſhew any good reaſon, why *Moſes* muſt be underſtood to ſpeak in a Figurative ſenſe?

L. Becauſe in this Life we all ſee God, darkly, as through a glaſs, and therefore cannot in all things ſpeak properly of him as

as he is, but must be compelled by necessity to transfer some words from those things we more perfectly understand, to signfie those Perfections in God, which are less perfectly understood by us.

S. I wonder you will deny, That the *Revelation* was adapted to the Capacity of the Prophet, when so many Instances of it are brought by this *Author*, extracted from your very Bibles. *Moses* thought God was in a peculiar manner, Governour of the *Jews*, but that the Government of other Countries was left to inferiour *Deities*, who were called, the Gods of other Nations. *See for this*, *Exod.* 15. 11. and 2 *Chron.* 32. 19. He also absurdly dreamed, That God, who is every where, was confined to live in Heaven. *For this*, *see Deut.* 33. 27. *Jonas* presumed himself able to fly from the very presence of God. *Solomon* dispis'd all the Laws prescrib'd to a King, tho he was esteemed the wisest of all the *Jewish* Nation. The Doctrin of *Ezekiel*, is directly opposite to the Doctrin taught by *Moses*; as you will find, if you compare his 18 *Chap.* with the *7th. Ver.* of the 31 of *Exod.* or the 18*th.* of the 22*d.* of *Jeremiah*. *Samuel* believed, that God never repented of his Decree, *See* 15. *Sam. ver.* 29. *Jeremiah* taught, that God, upon condition

of Repentance, did reverſe his Decree of Judgment againſt notorious Sinners. It appears from *Gen.* 4. *v.* 7. That Man has power to reſiſt Temptation; but St. *Paul* teaches, That Man has no Government over his own Thoughts, or Actions, but by the ſingular Calling and Grace of God. *See the* 9th. *to the* Romans. And when he aſcribes Juſtice to God, he Corrects himſelf, by ſaying, *He ſpoke after the manner of Men.* From whence it is as clear to me as the Sun, that what you call *Divine Revelation*, or *Divine Inſpiration*, never made any man wiſer than he was before, but either left him, or confirm'd him, in thoſe very Prejudices of Opinion, in which at firſt it found him: Unleſs in matters of *Morality*, for therein the Prophets were guided by known, and undeniable *Maxims.*

L. You muſter up the whole ſtrength of your *Author's* Forces, which conſiſts more in number, than in true Worth and Dignity. We do not deny that God condeſcends in the manifeſtations of his Will, to accommodate himſelf to the weak capacities of his Creature Man, but that does no ways incline us to believe, that he ever reveals to Man any thing that is falſe, or that he confirms him in his preconceived Errors, or that whenſoever he is pleaſed

to

to reveal himſelf in a Supernatural manner, he cannot, or does not do it with the ſame degree of Perſpicuity, as one man can tell his Thoughts to another. God indeed, has declared more to one Prophet than to another, but ſince he never ſpeaks any thing but truth to any, this is ſo far from being an Argument againſt reading any of the Prophets, (for ſo I call all Inſpired Authors) that it is a ſtrong inducement to peruſe them all, that ſo what we miſs in one, we may readily find in another. If Revelation diſcovered nothing new to Mankind, nor confirm'd truths of an eternal verity, it would be altogether needleſs, and if it by being adapted to Men's erroneous Prejudices, confirm them in the ſame, it would be pernicious, and God himſelf would be the Author, Abettor, and Divulger of Falſhood in the world, which I would have all young Men ſeriouſly to conſider, who are addicted to theſe *Deiſtical Notions*. *Epicurus*, who removed the *Deity* from all thoughts of humane Affairs, pays more honour to the *Divine Nature*, than thoſe who with your Author, ſuppoſe him to meddle therein, only to confound *natural Light*, and to contradict himſelf, and to ſend his Servants to plant, and propagate Falſhood in the World.

S. You seem now to be very hot, but, can you disprove the *Author*, whom you rashly Condemn, because he speaks truth more freely than is consistent with the Interest, or Humour of the *Clergy*?

L. I desire to be believed no farther than as you find what I say is agreeable to the *Testimony* of *Scriptures*, by which it will appear, that God has Revealed nothing to *Inspir'd Authors*, that any man can condemn of Error. *Secondly*, That he has declared to them such truths, as were directly repugnant to their Preconceived, Erroneous Opinions. And *Thirdly*, I will shew you, that the places of *Scripture* used by your *A* —, are no ways Subservient to his present design, and purpose. If your *Author* would Argue fairly against the Authority of the *Holy Scriptures*, he should have produced such places in them, which he could easily and plainly convince of Error in matters that belong to the Happiness of Mankind. But how much he fails in this, will appear by a Discussion of these Instances, which are alledged by him. *Moses* taught the *Jews*, that that very God, who made the Heaven and the Earth, was their God, who was revealed to *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob*, and who then by *Signs* and *Wonders*, had brought them out of the Land of *Egypt*; which plainly shews that

that he had right Conceptions of the *Unity* of the *Divine Nature*, as the firſt, and only cauſe of all things. But at the ſame time he knew, that the *Heathens* worſhipped other created, inviſible Powers, which they called Gods, tho unlike unto the true God, in all the *Glorious Attributes* of the *Divine Nature*; and this is all that can be gathered from the 11*th. ver.* of the 15*th. Chap.* of *Exodus*, *Who is like unto thee, O Lord, amongſt the Gods?* *Moſes* does not here aſſert, that there are more Gods than one, but only intimates, that there were more Beings than one, which were (tho falſely and equivocally) called Gods by the deluded *Pagans*. But why do we wonder, that inviſible Powers in compliance to the common Dialect at that time in the World, are ſtiled Gods, when Magiſtrates themſelves, by no improper Figure are dignified with the ſame honourable Appellation, *Pſ.* 6*th.* and 7*th. I have ſaid you are Gods, and all of you the Children of the moſt High, but ye ſhall dye like men, and fall like one of the Princes.* Will any be ſo abſurd to conclude from hence, that the *Pſalmiſt* thought, that there was little or no difference between God and Man? Nor does it at all appear from the 19*th. ver.* of the 32*d. Chap.* of the *Chron.* That the *Jews* thought, that God left other Na-

tions, to the Government of other Gods, ſubſtituted by him; the words are theſe, *And they ſpake againſt the God of Jeruſalem, as againſt the Gods of the People of the Earth, which were the work of the hands of men.* It was not the Beſieged *Jews*, but the Beſieging *Pagans*, who called thoſe inferior Beings, by the name of Gods, which were worſhipped by the deluded *Pagans*; the *Jews* acknowledged them only as the work of the hands of men. In the 17 *Chap.* of the 2*d.* of *Kings*, gives only an Hiſtorical Account of the Sentiments of thoſe *Pagans*, who were tranſlated into the Regions of *Iſrael*, from remoter Nations; they indeed had the ſame Apprehenſions of the God of *Jeruſalem*, as others had of their Topical Deitys, who were confined to the Government of certain Places, Perſons, Arts, or Sciences, according to the Opinion of the Ancients, and therefore mingled ſome Ceremonies of the true, with all the Superſtitions of a falſe Religion. But the *Author* of this Hiſtory, is ſo far from approving, that he utterly condemns, as well their Notions, as their Practices. In the 23*d. ver.*— *They fear not the Lord, neither do they after his Statutes, or after their Ordinances, or after the Law and Commandment, which the Lord commanded the Children of Jacob, whom he named Iſrael.*

S.

S. Why then does the *Scriptures* call them Gods?

L. Becauſe an Hiſtorian relating what others have ſaid, or are wont to ſay, muſt ſpeak in the ſame Dialect, if he will keep exactly to the truth; nor is any *Author* obliged to ſpeak always properly, when he may be better underſtood by a Figure.— The Apoſtle ſpeaks of ſome, *whoſe God was their Belly*, and tells us, *that Covetouſneſs is Idolatry*, and yet I never read of the God γαστὴρ or *Venter*, that were worſhipped by the Ancient *Greeks*, or *Romans*. *Perſius* makes him at moſt but a Maſter of Arts.—

Magiſter Artium ingeniique;
Largitur Venter.

And Money it ſelf was not Inveſted with *Divine Honours* in *Juvenals* time, if you will believe the Poet.

—Nullas numorum ereximus aras.

I wonder your *A* — ſhould forget one place of Scripture more conduceing to his purpoſe than any he has hitherto Cited, in the *4th. ver.* of the *4th. Chap.* of the *2d.* to the *Corinthians*; *Satan* is ſtiled, *the God of this World*, how plainly might he infer from thence, that *Satan* was revealed to

the Apoſtle, *as the God of this World.*

S. But what ſay you to *Moſes*'s Opinion, *That God lived in Heaven*, is not that an Error unworthy of a Philoſopher? And altogether *Pagan*?

L. If *Moſes* had taught, that God was ſo confined to Heaven, as to be excluded from the Earth, or from any part of the Univerſe, or from the Knowledge and Government of Humane Affairs, it might have given this *A*—— ſome very ſpecious pretence to cavil; but all that *Moſes* ſays, in the 26*th. ver.* of the 33*d.* of *Deut.* is, — *viz. There is none like unto the God of Jeſurun, who rideth on the Heavens in thy help, and in his excellency on the Sky.*—— God is every where, but his goodneſs, and power ſtreams forth more upon one place of the Univerſe, than another, for even as the Apoſtle obſerves in inanimate Beings, *There is one Glory of the Sun, and another Glory of the Moon, another of the Stars, for one Star differeth from another Star in Glory.* So much more may we apprehend, that God beſtows a greater Degree of his Glory upon thoſe places that are receptacles of the bleſſed Saints and Angels, than upon thoſe which are deſigned to the uſe of ſinful men. And God is ſaid, Emphatically, to be there, where he diſplays the ſtrongeſt Influences of his *Grace* and *Glory*! Your

Author

Author therefore very abſurdly endeavours to diſparage *Revelation*, as adapted to Erroneous Opinions of the Prophet, when hitherto he has given no Inſtance of one Error in them.

S. What do you think of *Moſes*'s deſire to ſee God?

L. I think ſeeing God in Scripture language, implys no more than a mere exact knowledge of him, than we uſually have in this preſent Life; for ſo ſpeaks our Saviour, *Bleſſed are the pure in Spirit, for they ſhall ſee God.* And the Apoſtles ſpeaking of a future State, aſſures us, *That then we ſhall ſee him as he is.*

S. But *Moſes*, *Exod.* 33*d.* 18*th.* deſired to ſee God with his Bodily Eyes.

L. Then God ſhould have been revealed unto him under a Bodily Shape, if your Author's *Hypotheſis* was true, *that God was always revealed to his Prophets, according to their Conceptions of him.* But your *A*——— confeſſes that *Moſes*, *nullam Dei, imaginem in cerebro Formaverat*, had formed no Image of God in his Brain, and therefore that God appeared under no Image to him. If therefore *Moſes* had formed no Image of God in his Brain, he did not apprehend him as Corporeal; for we always think of Bodies under ſome Image or another, framing, or compounding Images of Bodies

dies that we have not ſeen, from the Images of thoſe Bodies which have been ſeen by us; nor could he deſire, that God ſhould appear in any Corporeal ſhape to him; and then his deſire of ſeeing God, can ſignifie no more, than knowing ſomething more exactly of his *Spiritual Nature.*

S. My *Author* ſays plainly, it implys a contradiction, for a man to ſee God; but becauſe *Moſes* believed God to be viſible, God gave this Reaſon as conſentaneous to *Moſes* erroneous Opinion, —— *There ſhall no man ſee me and live.*

L. And yet the true meaning of thoſe words, according to a known *Hebraiſm*, is no more than this, *That no living man ſhall ſee God*, which is a *Revelation* directly contrary to the Apprehenſions of *Moſes*, as he is repreſented by your *A* ——

S. My Author tells me, that that ſignifies no more than, *that God is not to be ſeen*, by reaſon of Humane imbecility, and that God would not add the other Reaſon, *viz. That it was repugnant to the very Eſſence of God to be viſible*, becauſe that was above the Apprehenſions of his Servant *Moſes.*

L. Your *A* —— makes *Moſes* think whatever he pleaſes; in the 24*th. Page*, he will have him think that God could not be expreſſed by the Image of any thing that

that has been ſeen, tho he was viſible, in the Apprehenſion of *Moſes*; but in the 26*th*. *Page*, he aſſerts, *That* Moſes *formed no Image of God in his Brain, and that therefore God appeared not in any Image to him*, tho other Prophets affirm they ſaw God; But if *Moſes* thought God to be viſible, he muſt needs form ſome Image, tho perhaps no true one, of God in his mind, becauſe we think of all *Corporeal Beings* under ſome Figure or another, and if ſo, your *A*—— moſt groſsly contradicts himſelf; and if you conſult the *Text* it ſelf, you will ſee nothing in it, from whence you can conclude, *that* Moſes *thought God to be viſible*. -- For we read *ver*. 18. that he ſaid, *Shew me, I beſeech thee, thy Glory*; which implys no more than a deſire to ſee, not the *Divine Majeſty* its ſelf, but ſome *Created Being*, that might ſuſtain ſome very viſible Signatures of the Glory of God -- for whatever Glory God communicates to any Creature, as repreſentative as it were of himſelf, may very properly be called *the Glory of God*. What is Recorded of *Moſes*'s ſeeing the back parts of God, implys no more than this, *viz That God is ſeen in the Effects of Revealed Beings*, but is not viſible to us in the Act of Converſation.

S.

S. I cannot deny, but that ſeeing in Scripture, ſignifies no more than knowing, or perceiving, and therefore I am not unwilling to underſtand this place, as ſpeaking only of a clear and diſtinct pereeption.

L. I will not ſtand to confute ſome other ridiculous queſtions of your Author, *Viz.* Where he ſays, *That God threatned* (Exod. 33. 2, 3.) *to ſend his Angel onely to drive off the Hittites*, &c. In complyance to *Moſes* Erroneous Opinion, that other Nations were Governed by other Deities: When himſelf before had owned, that *Moſes* taught, that God whom the *Jews* Worſhipped, was the ſame that was from all Eternity, and made both the Heaven and the Earth: And therefore it could not be an Error in *Moſes*, to think, that God made uſe of Angels in Governing the World, when at the ſame time, he taught, that no other Being was to be Worſhipped, but the Lord *Jehovah*. His Obſervation, that *Moſes* aſcended the Mount to ſpeak with God, becauſe, conceiving God to dwell in Heaven, he could not ſo well imagine him (as he terms it) in any other place, is ridiculous to the higheſt Degree of Extravagance. What is more unphiloſophical, than to confine imagination

imagination to a Mount, which runs beyond the very bounds of the Universe, into imaginary Spaces, as far as it can have any Notion of possible existence. As if a Man could never Pray to God whom he believes to be in Heaven, unless he raised his imagination, by ascending into the upper Room of his House, or clamber'd up all the Stairs of the Monument. Nor is he much more successful in his other instances, upon which he endeavours to lay his rotten and deceitful Foundation. He tells us, *That* Jonas *thought he could fly from the presence of God, and go into Regions, subjected to other Powers, which were created by the supream God*: But if this was so, *Jonas* must have very odd Notions, of those Beings, who were substituted by God to govern other Nations; he must think that they were blind, and so could not see him come into their Territories, (and yet Angels are stiled Watchmen in the Holy Scriptures) or that they were negligent, and would give no Account of him, to their supreme Lord and Master, and that reflects much upon Him, who made, or employ'd them, or as Traytors to their Lord, who would willingly conceal a Rebel, which is altogether as absurd, as any of the preceeding suppositions. But Pray, why does flying from the presence

Jonas 1.

of

of God, neceſſarily imply a deſign to avoid his knowledge, as confined to the Land of *Canaan*? Is not *Cain* (*Gen.* 4. 16.) ſaid to have *gone out from the preſence of the Lord, and dwelt in the land of Nob*, before ever God had given the Land of *Canaan* to the Children of *Iſrael*. From whence it is to me evident, *that to go from the preſence of the Lord*, ſignifies no more than removing from that place, where the Revelation of the preſence of God is made, to ſome remoter Region. And *Jonas* fled to *Tarſhiſh*, not thinking to avoid the ſight of God, but rather fearing Man, more than God; he would not by proclaiming Deſtruction to *Nineveh*, draw upon himſelf the rage and tumult of a Popular Fury. *Solomon* acted contrary to the Law preſcribed by *Moſes* to a King of *Iſrael*, by multiplying Horſes, and Wives, and Chariots, but it does not follow, that therefore God was revealed to him, as approving that in one place, which he condemned in another: For Tranſgreſſion of a Law, does not argue Error in Judgment, but rather ſtrength of Appetite in moſt Criminals, few of which there are but can ſay,

——— *Video meliora, proboque,*
Deteriora ſequor.

The

The ſame *Solomon*, perſwaded by his Wives in his latter Days, went to the Temples of ſtrange Gods, (I preſume rather in compliance to their deſires, than to any inclination of his own.) Will your *A* —— hence conclude, according to his way of Arguing, that *Solomon* was taught by Inſpiration, the Adoration of a plurality of *Deitys*, when it is as contrary to Scriptures, as it is to Reaſon it ſelf. As for his imagination, that the 18*th*. *Chap*. of *Ezekiel*, is repugnant to the 7*th*. *ver*. of the 34*th*. of *Exod*. and to the 18*th*. *ver*. of the 32*d*. of *Jeremiah*, it is not much more hard to be confuted than any of the other. God is declared in the 7*th*. of the 34*th*. *As viſiting the Iniquity of the Fathers upon the Children, unto the third and fourth Generation.* And this is a truth, which all Men muſt obſerve, whether they will or no, it being interwoven into that conſtant order of things, which God has ſettled in the World. If God takes away an Eſtate from a wicked Father, the Son, tho pious, becomes the poorer for it, and the innocent Babe often expires by a Diſeaſe, that is gotten by the vicious Intemperance of a guilty Parent. For God, as Soveraign of the World, may by vertue of his indiſputable Prerogative, inflict whatever temporal Evils he pleaſes, upon the moſt innocent Perſon, without Injuſtice

juſtice, either by his Fathers Sins, or any other means whatſoever, becauſe he can recompence his light ſufferings here with an eternal weight of Glory hereafter. Nor does *Ezekiel* deny this truth, in the 18*th.* of *Ezekiel*, but only affirms, *That the Son ſhall not be puniſhed eternally for the ſin of his Father*: For that *Ezekiel* ſpeaks of eternal Puniſhments, which are always afflicted according to Merit, ſeems to me evident from the 26*th. ver. When the Righteous Man turneth away from his Righteouſneſs, and committeth Iniquity, and dieth in them; for the Iniquity that he hath done, ſhall he dye.* Where a diſtinction is manifeſtly made between Dying in Iniquity, which is the caſe of every Sinner, who dyes without Repentance; and dying for Iniquity, which muſt note future Puniſhments in the World to come, which are called in Scriptures *a ſecond Death.*

S. *Ezekiel* ſeems to me rather in this *Chap.* to ſpeak of God's diſtribution of *Temporal Puniſhments.* For the *Jews* had taken up the Proverb, *The Fathers have eaten ſowre grapes, and the Childrens teeth are ſet on edge.* Becauſe the Fathers had comitted many grand Tranſgreſſions, and the Children were led into Captivity for them.

L. And no doubt, but the Children alſo had filled up the meaſure of their Fathers Iniquity; but admitting even this, which yet ought not to be admitted, there is nothing like a contradiction in theſe two places, when the Son does ſuffer for the Father, if he himſelf is innocent, it is not to him a Puniſhment, nor always a misfortune, and God does not viſit his Trangreſſions upon him, becauſe nothing but wilful Sin is the Object of the *Divine Anger*. For external Evils, they may be turned to our Spiritual advantage, and therefore *Ezekiel* truly affirms, *That the Son ſhall not dye* (*i.e.* be puniſhed in anger with an utter exciſion) *for the ſin of the Father*. And yet the Son, by the vice and folly of the Father, may fall into very great poverty and afflictions, and by aiding, aſſiſting, and conſenting to his Fathers Crimes, may make himſelf partaker of the guilt, and then is as obvious to Experience, as to Reaſon, that *God does viſit the Iniquity of the Fathers, upon the Children, to the third and fourth Generation*. His other inſtance of *Samuel's* telling *Saul*, (1 *Sam.* 15, 29.) *The ſtrength of Iſrael will not lye, nor repent; for he is not a Man, that he ſhould repent*; is no contradiction to what *Jeremiah* ſays, 18. 7. *At what Inſtant I ſhall ſpeak concerning a Nation, and concern-*

ing a Kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to deſtroy it: If that Nation againſt whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil, which I thought to do unto them. Repentance in God can ſignifie no more than his not inflicting thoſe puniſhments, which he has threatned by his Prophets: But it does not follow, becauſe God would not releaſe the puniſhment of *Saul*, (which is all that can be gathered from the words of *Samuel*,) that therefore God would not avert his threatned puniſhment from any other repenting Sinner: *For God is not a Man*, (as the Text ſays,) *that he ſhould miſtake feigned, for a real repentance.* There are ſome appearances of contradiction in the moſt elaborate Authors, that ever yet wrote in this World, and the Commentators upon *Ariſtotle* himſelf, are as hard put to it to reconcile ſome places that look like contradiction, as any of thoſe who have wrote upon the *Text* of the *Old* and the *New Teſtament*.

S. Whatever you may ſay to the contrary, Revelation was always adapted to the capacity of thoſe towhom it was made; which makes me think there was nothing Supernatural in that which is ſo called.

L. I will then deſire you to tell me, what you think of the Revelation made to

Noah

Noah, that the World ſhould be drown'd with water. What natural capacity was there in *Noah* to conceive a thing ſo improbable, as ſuch a Deluge, when the greateſt Wits in theſe days, who believe it was done, are ſo much puzled to find out the manner of its doing.

S. Perhaps being well skilled in *Aſtronomy*, he might from the Stars be inform'd of ſome ſtrange alteration in the Weather.

L. And perhaps he might not, nay, it is certain he could not, nor are there any natural means to be conceived, whereby he could be informed of that impending danger; and unleſs you can conceive that *Noah* was ſo ſtark mad as to build an Ark, and take all manner of Beaſts and Fouls into it, out of a fantaſtical Fear, that he ſhould be drowned upon the dry-land; you muſt confeſs, he did it by virtue of a Supernatural Revelation.

S. Have you any other inſtance of the like nature?

L. Yes, more than I ſhall at preſent take pains to enumerate; but however, I will gratifie your curioſity with *two* or *three*, which will abundantly ſhew the falſity of your *A*——*s* ſo much boaſted Propoſition. We read in the 18*th. Chap.* of *Gen.* that *Sarah* was informed by the Angels, (10*th. ver.*) *That ſhe ſhould have a*

Son. But who, except *Spinoſa* will ſay, that this Prediction was accomodated to the capacity of *Sarah*, (or her Lord *Abraham*) when *Moſes* tells us in the 11*th.* and 12*th. ver. That Abraham and Sarah were old, and well ſtricken in age, and it ceaſed to be with Sarah after the manner of Women. Therefore Sarah laughed within herſelf, ſaying, After I am waxed old, ſhall I have pleaſure, my Lord being old alſo.*

S. A Woman might eaſily imagin what ſhe earneſtly deſired.

L. If you except againſt a Woman, let us conſider the Revelation made unto *Moſes*, which you will find to be directly contrary to the Apprehenſions, and above the Natural Conceptions of that mighty Prophet. I would feign learn how it was at all agreeable to the natural Conception of *Moſes*, that the lifting up his Rod ſhould be able to work all thoſe Signs, and Wonders, which it did in the Land of *Egypt*.

S. Tho it was not a Conception agreeable to reaſon, yet it might be to his Fancy, and we all know the ſtrength of Fancy in producing wonders.

L. Imagination, without doubt, has very great force upon the imagining Perſon, but that it ſhould be able to have force upon Objects placed without him, ſo as to work any viſible effect upon them, is

is to me, till I am better inform'd, a very abſurd ſuppoſition. I know ſome of the Ancients have been poſſeſſed with an Opinion, that the very Eyes of an Envious Perſon, do dart a Kind of Poyſon upon thoſe who are in a Great Station. And the *Poets* preſum'd they had the ſame, or like effect upon other Animals.

Neſcio quis Teneros oculus mihi faſcinat agnos.

And my Lord *Bacon* ſays ſomething to ſolve this *Phænomenon*, by the Effluviums of the Animal Spirits: And if the matter of it were true, which I do very much queſtion, his Lordſhips ſolution of it, would be the beſt that could be given. But ſuppoſing it true yet ſuch weak Effluvia's as are engendered by the ſtrength of imagination, whatever impreſſion they can make on the tender parts of humane Bodies, yet you cannot without Madneſs ſuppoſe them able to turn *Aarons Rod* into a Serpent, (or to make it more like a Living Creature) or turn a whole River into Blood, to divide the *Red Sea*, ſlay all the firſt Born of *Egypt*, and do works of the like ſtupendious Nature.

S. Did not *Pharaohs* Magicians do ſomething very like it?

L. All you can infer from thence is only this, *viz.* that they were aſſiſted by ſome inviſible Powers, which is more than Men of your Principles are willing to grant, who deny their exiſtence, or at leaſt their intermedling with humane Affairs.

S. But ſuppoſe, ſuch things done (as you Divines call it) by inviſible Powers, how ſhall a Man know whether thoſe Powers are Good, or Evil.

L. God being the Fountain of all Goodneſs, no Revelation is made, or confirmed by him, that is repugnant to the immutable Law of Nature, which conſiſts in unfeigned Love to God, and to our Neighbour. The *Pagan* Prieſts made great pretences to Propheſie and Miracles, but it was to confirm a ſuperſtition, contrary to Natural Light, and therefore thoſe ſeeming Signs and Wonders, are juſtly aſcribed to the Operation of Lying and Deceitful Spirits. For theſe are known Maxims, that Good cannot proceed from Evil, and that a Kingdom divided againſt it ſelf cannot ſtand, and we may as well conceive that light can be the Fruitful Mother of Darkneſs, as that *Satan* can be the Author, Abetter, or Confirmer, of the

Precepts

Precepts of the Decalogue, or the moſt Holy Rules of Practice deliver'd by our Bleſſed Saviour.

S. Does not your own Apoſtle ſay, that *Satan* can transform himſelf into an Angel of Light?

L. We don't ſay, that Evil Spirits do never Encourage a ſeeming Sanctity, that is groſs Wickedneſs in a Religious dreſs, but that they can't be Abetters, or Promulgers, of that real and genuine Sanctity, which is preſcribed by the *Moſaick* and Chriſtian Religion, and of the excellence of which we have as clear Perception, as we have of the Truth of any Mathematical Propoſition. But to paſs by *Moſes*, and deſcend to the other Prophets. What Pre-conception by Nature could *Iſaiah* have, that *Cyrus* ſhould be King of *Perſia*, that *Jeruſalem* ſhould be deſtroyed by the *Chaldeans*, and that that very *Cyrus*, (See *Iſa.* 44. 28.) *Should rebuild the Temple, ſaying to* Jeruſalem, *thou ſhalt be built, and to the Temple, thy Foundation ſhall be laid.* If *Revelation* was adapted only to the Capacity of the Prophet, certainly, *Iſaiah* was a Perſon of the largeſt Natural Capacity, that ever yet was Born into the World, or, as I believe, ever will be Born hereafter.

S. You keep to inſtances in the Old Teſtament, it would be more to my ſatisfaction, to hear ſomething of this Nature to be alledged out of the New.

L. What think you of the Doctrine of the Incarnation of the Son of God; and of the Holy Trinity, which are founded upon Divine Revelation? Theſe could not be adapted to the Capacity, or Opinions of any one inſpired Author, ſince they are above the conception of all Mankind.

S. I fear you miſtake this Author. His meaning is not, that nothing is taught in Scripture, which exceeds humane conception, for (as he ſhews, *p.* 28.) The Prophets were ignorant of ſpeculative things, and were of contrary Opinions amongſt themſelves, and therefore they might give Vent to ſome odd Opinions, which are altogether irreconcilable to the reaſonable conceptions of other Men.

L. I have already examined all thoſe places of Scripture, upon which he would ground this wild aſſertion, and I hope, have plainly ſhewed, that no ſuch thing can be deduced from them. But to come cloſer to the purpoſe. Your Author muſt Acknowledge, either that the Prophets (as he calls all Divinely inſpired Authors)

Authors) were assisted and taught by God, or that they were guided by their Natural Fancy, Reason, and Judgment. If Prophecy does come from God, and if it be according to his own Definition, in the very first Words of his Book, the certain Knowledge of some things reveal'd to Men by God, he cannot overthrow the certainty of it, in Speculations as well as Practicks, untill he can destroy the very *Idea*, which all rational Men do entertain of God. He must suppose him either to be nothing else, but the settled course and order of Nature, and then he, and his Disciples must quit the Name of *Deists*, and set up in the open Defence of Atheism: Or, he must bring upon the Stage an unthinking, ignorant, or deceitful Deity, that told his Servants a parcel of Idle, Contradictory, and Lying Stories, to amuse the world with a Noise of Divine Truths, whereas they were in reality nothing else, but the Erroneous conceptions of fanciful Men. But if on the other hand, he Acknowledge nothing at all of Divinity, in those whom we receive as inspired Authors, he must then shew his Reader, how the Prophesies and Miracles of those Men, are reconcilable with the ordinary Course and Power of Nature.

S.

S. He does ſhew you, in his 4th Chapter, that there neither is, nor can be any ſuch thing as a Miracle.

L. We will diſcourſe that point more narrowly ſome other time, but at preſent, I will onely urge one inſtance more, that utterly overthrows your Authors ſandy Foundation. We read, in the 2d Chapter of the *Acts*, that when the Apoſtles were all with one accord in one place, there appeared unto them *Cloven Tongues*, and ſate upon each of them, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghoſt, and began to ſpeak with other Tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. Now I would feign learn from your Author, who ſome ſay was a School Maſter, and therefore ought to be well verſed in the *Didacticks*, whether there be any way in Nature, to teach any one Man, much leſs a Number of Men, the Words, and Idioms of many Foreign and unknown Languages, in a moment, or inſtant of time?

S. I muſt confeſs, I cannot well conceive how ſuch a thing could be done, without the aſſiſtance of ſome inviſible Power; but ſtill this only proves an infuſed knowledge of words, but not of things.

L. If you grant an infuſed knowledge of words, it is the greateſt Folly in the World

World to deny the poſſibility of an infuſed knowledge of things. For it is much more eaſy to conceive, that God can declare his will to ſome choſen Perſons, and leave the manner of expreſſing it to their natural and acquired Abilities; than that he ſhould infuſe, *ſimul & ſemel*, in one inſtant of time, the knowledge of ſeveral Languages into the minds of unlearned Men.

S. I for my part, am reſolved never to be a Bigot in ſpeculative Matters, and ſince he ſpeaks ſo much for Morality in all parts of his Book, I cannot chooſe but have a good Opinion of him.

L. Morality, and Mathematical Demonſtration, ſerve many times for canting terms, to be ſpecious covers to Wickedneſs and Non-ſenſe. He grants, the Prophets had clear Perceptions of Morality, for ſo may all Mankind beſides, but that we are not bound to believe them in any thing that is ſpeculative; that is, we may Lawfully reject all the *Credenda* of the *Moſaick*, or the Chriſtian Religion. As for Example, according to his way of arguing, when the Scripture tells, *You muſt Love the Lord your God, with all your Heart, with all your Soul*, It onely teaches you, that you ſhould be Pious; but you are not bound to believe from thence, that

that there is a God, or that he Governs the World, or that he alone is to be Worshipped, for these, according to his Hypothesis, are speculative Opinions, concerning which the Prophets had contrary and repugnant Notions : And thus your Author would plant abundance of Piety, but not one grain of the Knowledge of God in the World. After the same manner, when the Apostle says, 2 *Thes.* 1. 7. *That the Lord Jesus Christ shall be reveal'd from Heaven, with his mighty Angels*, v. 8. *in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ*, v. 9. *Who shall be punished with Everlasting Destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and from the Glory of his Power.* We are to Learn, that we are to obey the Gospel in being Just and Charitable, but we must not thence, infer, that those who are unjust and uncharitable, *Shall certainly be Punished with Flaming Fire, or with an Everlasting Destruction from the Face of the Lord*; And I will now leave it to your Judgment what Friend he can be to Piety, Justice, or Charity, who divests them of the certainty of a future reward, and leaves them no other Encouragement, than what arises from the Government of the passions in this Life, which

which tho it be a considerable part, yet it cannot be the whole of humane Happiness. Or, whether he is not an Encourager of Impiety, Injustice, and Oppression, and all manner of known and unknown Vices, who takes away from wicked Men, the Terror of being tormented with the Devil and his Angels. For tho our Saviour says, *Mat.* 12. 16. *If Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself, his Kingdom cannot stand.* He will have this Argument only adapted to the Opinion of the *Pharisees*, but no proof that there is a Devil, or any Kingdom of malicious Spirits, and so good night to your Author's Morality.

S. When you read his *4th. Chap.* you will see how earnestly he Pleads for Virtue.

L. If you will bring me what he says, another time, I will gladly admit all that is true, and oppose nothing but notorious Falshoods.

Confer-

Conference III.

S. WEll, *Sir*, according to my promiſe, I have read over the 4*th*. *Chap*. of my Author, (paſſing by his *third*, becauſe it chiefly concerns the *Jews*,) wherein, I find him to be a very zealous Advocate of true Virtue and Goodneſs, which I value more than any Speculative Opinion, ſo much contended for by the Sons of the Clergy.

L. If obedience and ſubmiſſion to God, is the principal Law of Nature, then it is as much our Duty, to believe a Truth when revealed, as it is to obey a Commandment when it is promulged, and then it follows, that what he calls Speculation, is neither more nor leſs than a practical, neceſſary Duty.

S. Your error proceeds from your falſe Apprehenſions of a true notion of a Law. He ſhews you in his 43*d*. *Page*, that the word Law, abſolutely taken, ſignifies that, according to which every individual, or ſome of the ſame ſpecies, do all, or ſome one thing, by a certain and determinate Reaſon; and that it depends either upon the

the neceſſity of Nature, or the conſent, or authority of Men.

L. Then farewel at once to all *Divine Laws*, but thoſe which he fancys depend upon the neceſſary motions of matter, or are confined by the Authority of the Civil Magiſtrate, or receive their ſtrength from the mutual conſent of ſome determinate Society of Men.

S. I hope you will not deny, that Corporeal Neceſſity is a Law, when all Authors ſpeak in the ſame Dialect; does not *Cartes* make mention of the Laws of Motion?

L. Cartes, and other Philoſophers, have the liberty to Transfer words from their proper Signification, to denote ſuch things as are beſt underſtood by a metaphorical Expreſſion. And hence it is, that thoſe Obſervations, which ingenious Men make of the neceſſary reſt of motion of matter, are called (but figuratively) by the name of Laws; but your *A* —— ſhews no ſmall plenty of ignorance, when he would have the word Law, to ſignifie, abſolutely, corporeal neceſſity of Nature, which properly ſpeaking is not capable of receiving a Law. Nay, he ſeems to contradict himſelf, for he ſays in the 44*th. Page*, that the word Law, ſeems to be applyed to natural things, by Tranſlation, and if by

Legis nomen abſolute ſumptum, &c.

Nomen Legis per Tranſlationem ad res Naturales applicatum videtur.

by Tranſlation, then not abſolutely, or properly, as in this place he ſo boldly affirmeth.

S. But what need this ſtrife about words, if we are agreed upon the thing it ſelf? Why may not my Author claim the ſame liberty of Speech, as is allowed to *Des Cartes*, *Gaſſendus*, or others of our modern Virtuoſo's?

L. Becauſe he deſigns thereby to eſtabliſh a fatal neceſſity in the very minds of Men, which renders them uncapable of receiving a Law, properly ſo called, which always ſuppoſes a liberty of choice, and is attended with the Sanctions of Rewards and Puniſhments; for tho in the 44*th.* Page he tells us, *That ſome Laws depend upon the free Arbitration of Men*, yet he adds, *That he muſt needs grant, that all things are determined by the univerſal Laws of Nature, both to Operate, and to Exiſt, in a certain, and unavoidably manner*; and indeed if all things that are, are material, and the Soul its ſelf nothing but a particle of rarefied matter, and all matter is bound by the neceſſity of nature, to ſuch and ſuch particular Rules; it follows, thoſe Laws of Men which ſeem moſt Arbitrary, are as much ſubject to fatal neceſſity, as any other operation of dull, and unthinking matter. All the difference is, that in the deſcend-

deſcending of a Stone, or the aſcending of the Fire, we can ſee and underſtand the Concatenation, and Co-ordination of neceſſary cauſes, but this Chain is leſs viſible in the determinations of the Will, to what we call Moral Good or Evil. But ſtill there is a Chain, that binds a Man as ſtrongly, as if its invincibility was manifeſt to the Eyes of all Men: and if ſo, then he that kills his Father, or Mother, acts by the ſame neceſſary Laws of Nature, as he that Honours and Obeys them. And this is the beſt, and trueſt account, that I can give of your *Author's* Scheme of Morality.

S. You muſt needs miſtake him, for he has theſe words,

Dico tamen has leges, ex placito Hominum pendere.

L. That is, becauſe your *A*---- would Monopolize the liberty of contradicting his own Aſſertions, but obſerve his caution, he does not ſay abſolutely, that theſe, or any Laws do depend upon the free will of Man, but that they may be ſaid to do ſo. Firſt, *Becauſe Man being a part of Nature, whatſoever is done by the neceſſity of Humane Nature, tho it be done by the general, and irreſiſtable force of Nature,*

yet becauſe they proceed immediately from Humane Power, therefore the Sanctions of thoſe Laws may be ſaid to proceed from the will of Man. But what is this to the purpoſe? If there be a general force of Nature, which determines all things, even the very Soul and Will of Man, to make Laws whether it will or no, then the making theſe Laws, or the paying Obedience to them, are no free, but neceſſary Acts, and Men are morally good or evil, not by free choice, but by a neceſſary compulſion: And this he plainly acknowledges in his ſecond reaſon, and onely adds, that the Univerſal conſideration of fate, and concatenation of cauſes, cannot ſerve us, to form right conceptions of Law, and that therefore tho all Actions are predetermin'd by fate, yet it is better to talk of them as Free and Arbitrary.

S. Let us not quarrel about words, but come to the Definition of the thing, he tells you, that a Law is a Manner of Living, which a Man preſcribes to himſelf, or to others, for ſome End, beſt known to himſelf. How do you like this Definition? P. 44.

L. I ſhould rather have approved of it, if he had defin'd it a Manner of Living, preſcribed by a Superior to an Inferior, and always attended with the Sanction of Rewards and Puniſhments. *S.*

S. Every Man Loves the Product of his own Brains; but Pray, why is your Definition to be preferr'd before my Author's?

L. For ſeveral Reaſons. *Firſt*, becauſe it does not exclude God from the Legiſlative Power, which is moſt ſlily done in your Author's Definition. A Law is a Rule, or Manner of Living, or Acting, that is ſuppoſed to proceed from ſome Rational, Intelligent, or thinking Being. And if your Author believes that any ſuch Being, is really exiſtant, why muſt he be excluded from the Legiſlative Power, and his Creature, Man, onely Intitled to it?

S. Does not my Author expreſsly ſay, (*p.* 45.) That the Law is to be Diſtinguiſhed into Divine and Humane?

L. Yes: But he tells you, that by a humane Law, he means ſuch a manner of Living, as is conducive to preſerve our lives, or the common wealth, and by a Divine Law he intends no more than a Law made, that has reſpect to the true Knowledge and Love of God. So that a Law made by God, to preſerve a Common-wealth, or the Life of Man, according to his Notion, is a humane Law, and a Law made by Man, which is referred to the Love and Knowledge of God, be-

comes a Divine Law. God is therefore abſolutely excluded by him, from any, ſo much as Vote, or ſhare of the Legiſlative Power.

S. Well, what is your next Exception?

L. I think in the 2d place, that he does not accurately enough define a Law, by a manner of Living preſcribed by a Man to himſelf. For Law implies Superiority in the very eſſential Notion of it. If a Man preſcribes a certain way of Living, or Acting to himſelf, it is at moſt but a reſolution, which may, upon alteration of circumſtances, be revoked without a Sin. If indeed, he calls God as a Witneſs to ſuch a reſolution, it becomes a Vow, and has in Lawful matters, all the Force and Virtue of a Law; but that force ariſes from the Superiority of the Perſon, *Viz. God himſelf, unto whom that Vow is made.*

S. Do not *Senators* make Laws, that bind themſelves?

L. Yes, and very juſtly too. For the Authority of a Collective Body of Men, is Superior to the Authority of any one Member of it, and he, or they that offend againſt it, in all Democratick Governments, are to be look'd upon, out of the *Senate*, but as Subjects to that Superior Power which is in the collected Body.

S.

S. This at moſt, is but a vain *Logomachy*; Pray, what have you more than this, to object againſt this Definition?

L. I ſay, Thirdly, that he very unskilfully leaves out the Sanction of Rewards and Puniſhments, which are eſſential to a Law.

S. Cannot a Superior preſcribe a Rule to an Inferior, without adding threats, or promiſes?

L. Yes, he may: But then the obligation to obedience ariſes from the Good, that may be gained by that Obedience, or by the Evil, that may be avoided by it. If a Superior, by which I underſtand one that has Power and Right over me, command me to do a thing, it follows, that my diſobedience muſt needs expoſe me to the dire Effects of his Diſpleaſure, and that is a ſufficient Sanction to conſtitute a Law, without any expreſs threatning of any one particular puniſhment, the Power of Inflicting, which is ſuppoſed as eſſentially inherent in the Superior Perſon. And the ſame is to be ſaid of promiſes.

S. I think my Author ſhews very well, that cunning Lawgivers allure the vulgar to obedience, to wholeſome Laws, by propounding to them a quite different end, from that which is eſſential to the

Law its ſelf. For my part, I am willing to be Virtuous, for the reward, that by the neceſſity of Nature, muſt needs Spring from Virtue its ſelf; but I have no great Opinion of other Allurements, by which you Divines would intice Men to follow your own Direction.

L. I eaſily grant you, that there is a pleaſure of mind, ariſing from all Acts of Genuine Virtue, as there is a regret and torment, that attends upon Vice: And that the certain pain, or pleaſure, which Accompanies theſe, with the addition of what probably may be farther expected from God, are the very Sanctions of the Law of Nature. But if there were no pain, or pleaſure, that followed any Action, either by neceſſity of Nature, or free will of God, I cannot conceive how there could be any ſuch thing as a Law. For to what purpoſe is a Law, when the Tranſgreſſion brings no Inconvenience, nor the performance of any pleaſure, or profit to the Subject?

S. How many Laws are daily Tranſgreſſed, and yet no Puniſhment inflicted on the offenders? Do they therefore ceaſe to be Laws?

L. No. Becauſe tho puniſhment is not actually inflicted upon all that *offend*, yet it is threatned to all, and the very danger of incurring

incurring the penalty, is a ſufficient Sanction. But in a penal Law, if all poſſibility of offending God, or Man, or our ſelves, were taken away, it would then loſe the very Nature of Law, and revolt again into its firſt State of Indifferency. To gain therefore Good, and to avoid Evil, is the true Ends of all Laws; and your Author very much miſtakes the point, when he repreſents rewards and puniſhments, as adapted onely to govern the vulgar, who know not the true End of Laws, and have not Learned the great Art of being Virtuous for Virtues ſake. For rewards and puniſhments, are adapted to work upon the will and affections of all mankind, even the Author himſelf, who would not have ventur'd to write ſuch a Book, if he had liv'd in a Countrey, where he had been ſure to have been puniſhed as he deſerves for it. He that Loves Virtue, or hates vice, muſt do it either for ſome Good, or Evil, eſſentially inherent, or accidentally annexed to them, and if God by *Moſes* and our Saviour, did explain, confirm and enlarge theſe Sanctions, or adapt them in ſome caſes to the apprehenſions of the vulgar, it does not follow, that obedience to theſe Laws is ſervile, but rather that it is a reaſonable ſervice.

S. Is he a juſt Man, that forbears to ſteal for fear of hanging?

L. No: but yet he may be a juſt Man, who forbears to ſteal, for fear of running into that Evil, which reaſon ſhews is intrinſically inherent in it, or which God by his Prophets has threatned, as conſequential to it. And therefore to diſſwade Men from having any regard to rewards, or puniſhments, is the ſame thing as to diſſwade them from Acting like Men, or chooſing what is beſt, like unto rational Creatures.

S. Notwithſtanding your Pulpit-Cants, my Author gives you a more noble Scheme of Virtue. He ſhews you, that our underſtanding being our beſt part, our chiefeſt happineſs conſiſts in the perfection of that moſt excellent faculty. That all certain knowledge we can have, depends upon the knowledge which we have of God, becauſe nothing can exiſt, or be conceived without God, as alſo becauſe we may doubt of all things, whilſt we have no clear conception of God: Hence he tells you it follows, that all things which are in Nature, according to the manner of their Exiſtence, or Perfection, do involve, or expreſs our conception of God, and that therefore by how much the more we know Natural things,

things, ſo much the more we acquire a more perfect conception of God, or may be ſaid to know the very eſſence of God. And he is moſt happy, who loves the intellectual Knowledge of God above all things, and is moſt delighted with it. And theſe mediums of this knowledge, as far as conducive to this End, may be called the Laws of God.

L. Perfection of the underſtanding, cannot render a Man compleatly happy, unleſs he can prove that there is no other faculty in the mind of Man, but that of underſtanding only. For ſuppoſe, a Man has a good underſtanding, but an irregular Will and Affections, that Man cannot be ſaid to be compleatly happy. For happineſs being a full Enjoyment of all good things, it muſt be equally extended to all the faculties of the mind, or it ceaſes to be true happineſs. Our Saviour ſpeaks more emphatically to the purpoſe, *Ye know theſe things, happy are ye, if ye do them.* His Reaſon, why all the certainty can be had by Man, depends upon his right Knowledge of God, is very falſe and deceitful, *Viz. Becauſe nothing can be, or be conceived without God.* By which obſcure Circumlocution he means no more, in plain terms, than that there is no other God than the Univerſe, and that all

things

things that are in Nature, as he ſays, do involve a conception of God, and that by knowing natural things, we know the very Eſſence of God. For if God himſelf is not matter, an accurate knowledge of matter, cannot give us entrance into a more accurate Knowledge of God. *The Inviſible things of God from the Creation of the World, are clearly ſeen, being underſtood by the things that are made, even his Eternal Power and Godhead*; *ſays the Apoſtle St.* Paul. That is, *Our Knowledge, that ſome viſible things are made, which could not make themſelves, leads Man to an Acknowledgment, that they were made by the Eternal, Inviſible Power of the Godhead.* But this Knowledge ariſes not from an accurate diſcuſſion of all the properties of matter, ſince it may be deduced from the knowledge of its bare Exiſtence. For the very Creation of Matter, ſhews the Inviſible Power of God, tho his wiſdom is more viſibly ſeen in the various Modification of it. But ſtill it does not follow, that they who beſt know Natural things, do beſt know the very Eſſence of God, unleſs God himſelf be nothing elſe but the matter of the Univerſe. Suppoſe, a Man ſhould be a great *Virtuoſo*, and very ingenious in rendring an Account of the concatenation of ſecondary cauſes, and yet

Rom. 1. 20.

ſhould

ſhould deny the inviſible Power of God, would you ſay, that by how much the more perfectly he knew natural things; ſo much more perfectly, he knew the very Eſſence of God.

S. Will you deny what he ſo zealouſly aſſerts, *That the knowledge and love of God is the happineſs of Man, the very end and ſcope of all humane Actions, and the chiefeſt Good that can be attained by us.* Is it not nobly ſaid by him, *That we are to love God as our chiefeſt Good, not for fear of any puniſhment, nor for love of any thing with which we are delighted, but meerly for himſelf.*

L. If your Author, who ſo often makes mention of the word *God*, would have told us diſtinctly what he meant by it, this 46*th* page would have ſeem'd to have had ſomething like Natural Religion in it. But if you reflect upon the preceeding words, and the whole ſcope of his book, you will find, that God ſignifies no more in him, than the whole Compages of Nature, and that he who knows Natural Things, knows the very Eſſence of God; and then to know God, and to love God, tho ſplendid Terms, yet in reality ſignifie no more than to turn *Virtuoſo*, and ſtudy the Works of Nature, and to love the World, and hug its Enjoymeuts as your whole happineſs, without troubling your head

head with the thoughts of the Joys of Heaven, or the fear of Hell, which your Author rejects, as conceptions unworthy of a true Philoſopher.

S. I, for my part, own an incorporeal Deity, tho I don't believe all the Stories you Parſons tell us of him; and I believe my Author is of the ſame mind.

L. I do not find it appear in any part of his Writings But this I obſerve, that by God he underſtands a Being, that cannot ſpeak intelligibly to mankind, but by the fixed courſe of Nature, and that ſuffers us to be abuſed by Jugling Tricks and Impoſtures, that Vaunt themſelves as Divine Revelations, and that cannot work a miracle, unleſs your Author gives him leave, and from whom you are to expect no Good, and to fear no Evil. So that all his morality, is reduced to the Love and Knowledge of God, and that is either the Univerſe, or an *otioſe*, unactive Being, which is next to nothing.

S. Some men are reſolved to approve of nothing. Pray, what can you ſay, concerning thoſe conſequences, which he draws from his Notion of the Law of Nature?

L. If you tell me what they are, I will give you my impartial opinion of them.

S.

S. He ſays, reaſon is univerſal, Revelation limited.

L. That the Law of Nature, rightly underſtood, is Univerſal ; will eaſily be granted by thoſe who underſtand what humane Nature is. But your Author cannot infer from hence, that it is a greater Good to mankind than Divine Revelation, becauſe it is a more general good. For tho a diffuſive Good in reſpect of its diffuſive Nature, is to be preferred before that which is reſtrained and confined, *cæteris paribus*, yet it is not to be ſo abſolutely, or without exception. Virtue is a greater Good than the light of the Sun, even in your Authors Opinion, who calls it the chiefeſt Good of man, and yet more men receive benefit from the Light of the Sun, than from Genuine Virtue, if you will believe the *Greek* Proverb,

πλείους εἰσὶ κακοὶ.

S. Ay, but this is the great advantage of reaſon above Revelation, that it does not require an Hiſtorical belief, which can never work in us the Love of God; for that is onely to be deduced from ſuch common Notions, as carry their own certainty along with them.

L. The great defects of Hiſtory, are uncertainty, deficiency, ſuperfluity and impertinency; when theſe are abſent, Hiſtory is very completive of the intellectual faculties of man. For Hiſtory is nothing elſe, as my Lord *Bacon* well obſerves, but a Narration of the various Operations of Individuals circumſcribed to Time and Place, and its chief end is to advance memory, which is as it were the great Store-Houſe, or Magazine of Knowledge. Uncertain Hiſtory is a Narration of ſuch things, as either never were done, or have not been well atteſted, ſo as to leave no room for doubt. And this defect in Hiſtory deſtroys the very end of it, which is to give us a certain account of what has been done already, that ſo we may know how to Act our ſelves for the future. Deficient Hiſtory, is an imperfect collection of remarkable Occurrences, wherein many things are omitted, which are worthy a wiſe Mans obſervation. And tho this deſtroys not the End of Hiſtory, which is certainty of knowledge, yet it Anſwers not the Expectations of a Thirſty Soul. Impertinent, or Superfluous Hiſtory, is a Narration of ſuch Actions, or Circumſtances of Action, as for their turpitude, or meaneſs, deſerve not to be recorded. And this is a defect,

which

which can no other ways be ſupplied, than by a total abolition of thoſe trifling Authors.

S. What is it you would infer from hence?

L. That Faith grounded upon true and uſeful Hiſtory, may give us a right knowledge, and due love of God.

S. How can Faith, that reſts upon humane Authority, contend for certainty with Reaſon, that proceeds by ſuch common Notions, which are admitted as true by all men.

L. Natural Reaſon does enable men to underſtand, that God ought to be loved, as the firſt cauſe of all thoſe good things, which his Creature Man does enjoy. But then there is a certainty in Senſe, as well as in Reaſon, tho after another manner: And therefore, if the Senſes of ſome Men have been rationally convinced, that God has beſtowed other Benefits upon them, than thoſe that were beſtowed at their Creation, or conveyed by the inviſible Hand of his Providence: Why ſhould not ſuch a knowledge excite them to all imaginable Love, and Gratitude to their great Benefactor? The certainty of a Benefit received, is all that every good Man requires, in order to be Grateful; and whether that certainty is grounded upon abſtracted Reaſon,

ſon, or a true, faithful Narrative of a mattter of Fact, is not much to the purpoſe —— So abſurdly does your *A*-- aſſerts, *Nec fides Hiſtoriarum quantumvis certa, Dei cognitionem, & conſequenter, nec etiam Dei amorem vobis dare poteſt.*

S. He does not deny that it can't give us Motives to love God, but it can't work in us the love of God, whether we will or no.

L. No more can his adored Reaſon; for many of the greateſt pretenders to Reaſon, have been the moſt impious Men in the World.

S. You Divines repreſent God to the Vulgar, as a Law-giver, and his Commands you call his Laws; but alas, you miſtake the point. For Eternal Verities are the only Laws of God, who Acts by the neceſſity of his own Nature: For the Affirmations, and Negations of God, do always involve an Eternal verity and neceſſity in themſelves. If God had ſaid to *Adam, Thou ſhalt not Eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil,* it would imply a contradiction to ſay, that he did Eat of it.

L. Does not your Author in ſome places ſay, *That to know and to Love God is the Divine Law?*

S. Yet I think, he does.

L.

L. Then according to his way of arguing, all men (even the Author himself) do know and Love God, and must do so whether they will or no, to the End of the World: And then there is no difference between Virtue and Vice, for both are done according to God's Will, according to your Authors sentiments, for both are the Effects of an Eternal necessity, of causes linkt together. The Apostle says, *This is the Will of God, even your Sanctification:* Therefore all men are actually sanctify'd, *God bid* Abraham *Sacrifice his Son, therefore he was Sacrificed; is not this a pretty way of arguing, to make sport for Children and Fools?*

S. Moral Propositions in themselves, are nothing but Eternal Verities, and it was the Prophets only, who were led by fancy, and the Vulgar who are guided by sense, who apprehend them as Laws given by God, *The Law-giver, whom they look upon as a just and merciful Prince, setting upon a Throne, and distributing rewards and punishments, to all his Subjects.*

L. Your Author must either grant, that God is a wise and understanding Being, and a free Agent, or nothing else but the Mass of Dull and unthinking matter. If he embrace the latter, he should be Master of so much courage as to tell us,

and not to play always in the dark, with his two ambiguous Terms of God and Nature. If he will allow, that God is a wiſe Being, and a free Agent, I cannot conceive any reaſon, why he ſhould deny him to be a Law-giver, ſince Wiſdom, Power, and Authority, are inſeparably interwoven into the very Notion of a God, without any groſs conceptions of his ſetting upon a Throne, like an Earthly Monarch. And if there is an Eternal reaſon, why *God ſhould be Loved, and Innocence Protected*, &c. Which every Man is conſcious to himſelf, that he can do, or let it alone; and beſides, *If God ſhews Man by Divine Revelation, what he would have done, and promiſes Rewards and Puniſhments, why muſt theſe Dictates of God and Nature be denied to be Laws, and I know not what Eternal Verities ſhuffled into their Room?*

S. Becauſe my Author ſhews, that all Moral Propoſitions are ſo.

L. Your Author ſhews nothing but meer Leger-de-main. *It is an Eternal Verity that God is to be Worſhipped, but it is no Eternal Verity that he is ſo.* A Moral Propoſition is a Divine Law, and an Eternal Verity in reſpect to that Goodneſs, which is Eſſential to it; but not for any Active neceſſity that attends the ſame.

For

For if the Will and Underſtanding be the ſame Thing in God, *Then God Wills all the Treaſons, Murthers, and Adulteries, which he underſtands have been committed in the World.*

S. Since you deſpiſe my Author's Scheme of Morality, Pray, let us hear one of your own drawing up.

L. I will refer that to Dr. *Cumberland*'s excellent Treatiſe of the Law of Nature, where he proves by reaſon equivalent unto, if not ſurpaſſing Mathematical Demonſtration, that the Law of God, and the whole rational univerſe, is the whole of the Law of Nature, and attended with ſufficient Sanctions of Rewards and Puniſhments, that are by God inſeparably interwoven into the Nature of things.

S. You do not hear me ſpeak againſt the Natural Law.

L. But by embracing unſound Principles, you utterly deſtroy the whole Force and Efficacy of it. Your Piety terminates in the adoration of ſuch a Piety, as tamely ſuffers the World to be abuſed into a belief of Miracles and Propheſie, and Inſpiration, without any rational poſſibility of a redreſs, and Acts by the inflexible neceſſity of his own Nature, ſo that all our Prayers, can make no more an impreſſion upon him, than upon a

Stone-Wall. Your Juſtice has no Proſpect of a future reward, and ſo in private is left at liberty, to Act what is moſt conducive to the preſervation of life and limb. And your Temperance has no other reſtraint, nor ſo much neither, than what Nature has given to thoſe Beaſts that Periſh. Thus your Deiſm begins with a fair pretence to Moral Philoſophy, but the End thereof is nothing elſe but a licentious Liberty and Corruption of Manners.

S. I muſt confeſs, *If there were rewards in Heaven, and Puniſhments in Hell, they would be great Encouragements to Virtue, and Suitable determents from Vice.* But you ground your hopes upon inſpired Authors, and they pretend to prove their Divine Miſſion by Miracles, whereas my Author proves, that there never was, nor can be ſuch a thing as a true Miracle, wrought in the Univerſe.

L. Then I will Diſcourſe that point with you, at our next Meeting, for I am loth to tire you with too long a Diſcourſe.

S. With all my Heart. For if I was well ſatisfy'd in that point, I ſhould be better affected to the Chriſtian Religion.

Con-

Conference IV.

OF MIRACLES.

S. SIR, you are well met: I remember, at our laſt Conference, you often appealed to Miracles, as the greateſt Confirmations of reveal'd Religion. But I have ſince that time carefully peruſed the Sixth Chapter of my very Ingenious Author, wherein I find ſuch Arguments againſt Miracles, as make me very much doubt, whether there ever was, or can be ſuch a thing as a Miracle, done in the World.

L. I deſire not to hear your Opinions, but would gladly be a Partaker of your Reaſons.

S. My Author very Judiciouſly obſerves, that it is, and always was the Mob of mankind, that are and were the great Miracle-Hunters, and Miracle-Makers. It is they, who think nothing to be the Work of God, that is done according to the uſual Courſe of Nature, but feign and believe Wonders, on purpoſe, that they may be thought the very Dar- *p. 67.*

lings of Heaven, *And that the Univerſe was made for the ſake of Man, one of the moſt inconſiderable Creatures in it.*

L. Our belief of Miracles, is grounded upon that reaſon, which is common unto all Mankind, not only the Unlearned Vulgar, but alſo the moſt ſublime Philoſophers, who muſt needs Acknowledge, that if matter was at firſt Created by a Spiritual Being out of nothing, and received from it thoſe Determinations of reſt, or motion, which we call its Laws, it may be again produc'd, or alter'd by the very ſelf ſame Power, which is all that is neceſſary to conſtitute a Miracle. The poſſibility therefore of a Miracle, is as evident to all Learned men, who have not ſaid in their Hearts, *that there is no God*, as any one propoſition in *Enclid*, and is as deducible from the true Idea of a God, as any of the moſt Legitimate Concluſions, that can be deduced from clear and undoubted premiſes. Your Author therefore with as much Haughtineſs as Falſehood, pretends to throw the belief of Miracles upon the Vulgar only; as if all the *Jewiſh* and Chriſtian Kings and Emperors; all the *Greek* and *Roman* Philoſphers, by Miracles converted to the Chriſtian Faith; all the Biſhops, Prieſts, and Deacons, that were, or ever ſhall be in

in the Church of God; were no better than an ignorant and unlearned Mob, in reſpect to himſelf, and two or three upſtart Philoſophers, who value themſelves upon the oppoſition they endeavour to make, againſt the moſt common Notions of all mankind.

S. You begin to be too warm; Pray, let us debate this matter; with more Reaſon and leſs Paſſion. My Author refers you to his Fourth Chapter of the Divine Law, where he has largely prov'd, *That whatſoever God determines, does involve an Eternal neceſſity, becauſe the underſtanding of God, is not really diſtinguiſhed from his Will.* And ſince nothing is neceſſarily done, but by Virtue of a Divine decree, it clearly follows, *That the Univerſal Laws of Nature, are the only Decrees of God.* If therefore any thing ſhould happen in Nature, that is repugnant to her Univerſal Laws, the ſame thing would be repugnant to the Divine Nature, decree, and underſtanding. p. 68.

L. Your Authors affected obſcurity in this Paragraph, is a ſign of want of Judgment, or elſe want of Courage, to ſpeak what he really thinks. He that would deſtroy the poſſibility of Miracles, muſt prove that there is no God, who has the ſame liberty of will, which we experi-

ence to be in our ſelves. And then indeed it would clearly follow, that if there was no God, nor no free Inviſible Agents, there could be no ſuch thing as a Miracle performed in the World. But Pray, how does your Author prove this Grand Aſſertion?

S. Oh, Sir, very Mathematically. He does it by the properties of a *Triangle*. For it is the ſame thing to ſay, that God underſtands that the 3 *Angles* of a *Triangle* are equal to 2 Right ones, as it is to ſay, that he wills it ſhould be ſo. For the truth of that propoſition, depends not upon the Nature of a *Triangle*, but the very Nature of God, in whom will and underſtanding are the ſame things.

See p. 49.

L. That a *Triangle* muſt needs have 3 *Angles*, equal to two Right ones, depends upon that Eternal truth in things, which is antecedent even to the Divine volition. Becauſe it implies a contradiction in the very Terms, to deny the ſame; and it is no limitation of the Power, or Will of God, to ſay he cannot will, or do theſe things, which imply a Contradiction in the very Terms. Gods underſtanding, or will, no more alters the eſſential Properties of a *Triangle*, than the underſtanding of a man, becauſe they flow from the very Idea of it. But is there

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the ſame neceſſity, that matter ſhould be always ty'd to the ſame Rules of Motion, as there is, that the 3 *Angles* of a *Triangle*, ſhould be equal to two Right ones? Does it imply a contradiction in the very Terms, that matter ſhould be created by a Spiritual Being, or receive its Laws of Motion from him, or have thoſe Laws controlled, or ſuſpended by the ſame Power that made them. If Nature be nothing indeed but matter and motion, and God be nothing elſe but Nature, then there can be no Miracles; not becauſe the underſtanding, or Will of God are the ſame, but becauſe, according to this Hypotheſis, there can be no ſuch thing as Will, or Underſtanding in God. Your Author in his Annotations tells us, that by Nature he underſtands not only matter, but *alia infinita*; but Pray, what *alia infinita* are theſe, that are comprehended under the word Nature? If a Spiritual and Intelligent Being, let him ſhew reaſon, why he cannot as well alter the courſe of the World, as he could at firſt Create it?

S. Becauſe it would argue mutability in God, which all ſound Philoſophers do acknowledge to be an Imperfection, that is unworthy of the Divine Nature.

L. This cannot be owned by thoſe Philoſophers, who believe that the world was not *ab æterno*, but Created by God. For there is more of Mutability in Creation of the whole Univerſe, than in the additional Creation of ſome parts of it only, which is all that we can underſtand by the word Miracle. I grant, indeed, that the Univerſal Laws of Motion, which God has given to the Univerſe, are ſufficient, to preſerve the World in that Beauty and Order, wherein we now both ſee and enjoy it; and that we may from thence Learn the great Wiſdom of our Heavenly Father, who could ſettle ſuch a courſe and order of things, by Chaining each effect to its moſt immediate cauſe, as might be ſufficient to ſupport the World to all Ages, without the frequent interpoſition of a Miraculous Power, to alter, or to amend, as it were, the work of his Hands. For if this ſettled courſe and order of things, did not give us a right Notion of the Wiſdom, Goodneſs, Power, and other Glorious Attributes of our great Creator, the Love of God could not be any Branch of the Law of Nature, which yet in words, at leaſt is more than once acknowledged by your own Author. Miracles, therefore, as your Author well enough obſerves, are not at all neceſſary

neceſſary to ſuſtain, or preſerve the Univerſe, ſince that may be, and is done by the ſettled and ordinary courſe of Nature. But yet there are other reaſons, which render Miracles highly neceſſary to mankind, at ſome times, and upon ſome ſignal occaſions, ſo that without them, we ſhould be the moſt miſerable Creatures of the whole Univerſe.

S. I would gladly hear what thoſe reaſons are.

L. When *Revelation* is neceſſary to ſhew men the way to Happineſs, then Miracles are equally neceſſary to ſhew men, that ſuch Beneficial *Revelations* do come from God. All men deſire Happineſs, and are conſcious to themſelves, that it is not in their own Power, but in the Gift of God. But they never can come to a certainty, either what Degree of Happineſs God will beſtow, nor upon what conditions, nor what Attonement will be accepted for Sin, without the Benefit of Divine Revelation, and ſuch Revelation cannot be made evident, without the rational Demonſtration of a Miraculous Power. For either God muſt make this Revelation to all mankind, which would diſorder, in a manner, the whole Courſe of Nature, by changing the Natural Faculties of the mind, into Super-

Supernatural Endowments, or he muſt beſtow a Divine Power upon thoſe few, to whom he immediately reveals his Will, whereby they may be known to be ſent by God.

S. Will you pretend then, that Gods readineſs to confer Happineſs, and to forgive Sins, are not known by the Light of Nature?

L. I grant, that the Great Benignity of the Divine Nature, is eaſily deducible from all the Works of his Hands, by all the Rules of unerring Reaſon: *And if we were Conſcious to our ſelves of no Sin, we might be certain that we ſhould receive no Evil from him.* But ſuppoſing our ſelves innocent (which yet is a very wild ſuppoſition) we cannot from the good things we enjoy by the Divine Bounty in this Life, abſolutely conclude what Good Things we ſhall enjoy in a future State. And much leſs, ſince we are guilty of known Breaches of the Divine Laws, can we be ſure of the Remiſſion of Sins, and the Donation of Eternal Happineſs, ſince it depends upon the free Goodneſs of God, which is not determined by any neceſſary Rule of Action. A *Deiſt* therefore expects Pardon from God, juſt ſo as a Condemn'd Criminal hopes Forgiveneſs, from a mild and gracious Prince. He has ſome Gene-

General Notion, of the Good-Nature of his Soveraign, and therefore has ſome hopes it may be extended to him, as well as to others. But a Chriſtian has the ſame aſſurance of a conditional Forgiveneſs of Sins, as a Malefactor has, that Sees and Reads a Proclamation of Pardon, under the broad Seal of his offended Prince. Tho Miracles therefore are not neceſſary to ſupport material Beings, yet they are to aſſure mankind, of its Happineſs, and which do you think is of greateſt moment? The Statelineſs of the Habitation, or the felicity of thoſe Rational Creatures that inhabit in it?

S. If Miracles were neceſſary to promote the Happineſs of all mankind, why are not all men made Partakers of their Beneficial influence? Why muſt Miracles be wrought only in ſome Ages of the World, and in the ſight too of only one Nation, not very Famous for War, or Learning? Why muſt all the Gentiles Periſh, becauſe they knew not a matter of Fact, that never was made known unto them? Theſe are prejudices againſt your reveal'd Religion, which I can never conquer, and am therefore forc'd to fly from that confined Light, to the more diffuſive Light of Nature.

L. Whilſt man kept that integrity, wherein he was at firſt Created, there was no abſolute neceſſity of Miracles to make him happy, who was happy enough before in the Enjoyment of his own Innocence. Nor was there any great need of Miracles, whilſt a traditionary knowledge of the Decree of God, *to ſave mankind*, was kept alive in the World, by the long Lives of the *Ante-diluvian Patriarchs*. But when all Fleſh had Corrupted their ways before God, and the Knowledge of one ſupreme Deity, which ſome will have to be a Connate Notion, was almoſt totally eraced out of the minds of all mankind, as is evident from humane, as well as Divine *Hiſtorians*, then it was very expedient that God ſhould make a farther Revelation of himſelf, confirmed by Miracles, without which it could not have had the force of a rational Evidence, *To ſave mankind from utter perdition.* And therefore, *God firſt called upon the World by* Noah, *the 8th Preacher of Righteouſneſs, and then called* Abraham *out of his Fathers Idolatrous Houſe, and made a Covenant with him, that he and his Seed, ſhould ſerve him.* And when the State of the World required, that a manner of adoring God ſhould be ſettled in it, tho not abſolutely beſt in its own Nature, yet moſt

moſt ſuitable to the Genius of the *Jews*, and that poſture of affairs, which was then Predominant in the World; the Wickedneſs and Folly of Man, in abuſing the Light of Nature, render'd it neceſſary, *That* Moſes *ſhould be ſent to the Iſraelites, to bring them out of the Land of* Egypt, *with Signs, and Wonders, and ſhew them after what manner God would then be Worſhipped.* So that Miracles are neceſſary, firſt, when a new manner of Worſhip is to be planted in the World: And therefore *Moſes* was endued with the Power of Working Miracles, to convince the *Iſraelites*, that the Ceremonial Law was Divine, tho additional to the Law of Nature. Or Secondly, When the true manner of worſhip is in danger of being loſt, *And therefore* Elijah *and* Eliſha *in the Time of* Ahab, *when Idolatry made its greateſt encroachment upon the true Religion, by Divers Signs and Wonders from Heaven, called back the Iſraelites, to the true Worſhip of the only God.* Or Thirdly, When a manner of worſhip, that is of Divine inſtitution is to be alter'd, or diſannull'd, as was the Ceremonial Law by the coming of our Saviour.

S. But what muſt become of thoſe, who never ſaw nor heard of theſe Miraculous Revelations?

L. They have the Light of Nature, *Let them uſe that well, and leave themſelves to the Mercy of God.* The Scriptures no where ſay, *That all thoſe who have not ſeen nor heard of a Miracle, ſhall be Damn'd, tho it teaches, that if they be ſav'd, it muſt be by Virtue of the Name of Jeſus.* And therefore the ſtrength of your argument is quite loſt, unleſs you can prove that wild aſſertion. Beſides, the knowledge of reveal'd Religion, is not put up in ſo narrow a corner of the World, as men of your perſwaſion do ſeem to imagine. For there is no Nation, but what may embrace the Goſpel, if they pleaſe to liſten to its rational evidence, and I would feign know what injuſtice it is in God, to ſuffer them to Periſh, who either knowing nothing of the Miraculous Demonſtration of the Goſpel, make an ill uſe of the Light of Nature, or thoſe who hearing its rational evidence, abuſe their reaſon in not conſenting to it?

S. But ſtill you do not clear the main difficulty, objected by my Author, that the Power of Nature, is the very Power of God. How then can a Miracle be done by Natural Power?

S. Your Author firſt begs his Queſtion, and then very boldly Triumphs in the Victory, as if extorted by force of reaſon.

He presumes it granted as a first Principle, *That there is no other God but Nature, and that this Nature is fixed and immutable, not a free Agent, but a perpetual slave to fatal necessity.* And thence strongly concludes, *That if there be no Power but that of Nature, then there can be* (oh, wonderful demonstration!) *no supernatural Power.* But we, on the other hand, proceed by a more plain and intelligible way of reasoning. We suppose, That since Matter is a dull, unactive Principle, it could not make it self, nor reduce it self into that decent and useful order, in which now we see it. 2*d*. That it was created by a Superiour Being: That that Superior Being must be endued with all manner of Perfections, as being the first Cause of all Perfections in the Creature. 3. That *Wisdom*, *Understanding* and *Liberty* are Perfections, and therefore consequently must be in the highest degree in him, who is the first Cause of them. And Lastly, *That his Wisdom is seen in all the works of his hands.* If therefore your Author would argue fairly against us, let him attack boldly any one of these Propositions, concerning the Nature of God; and if we cannot defend them, we will become Worshippers of the great Goddess Nature-- But if God is an Understanding Being, he

muſt be a free Agent: And if he be a powerful and free Agent, what ſhould hinder his ſtopping, or diſordering the regular courſe of Nature, when the doing ſo is conducive to his own Glory, and the general Benefit of all Mankind? Unleſs you can prove by Scripture, that he has ſworn by himſelf, he would never do it.

S. Does not my Author tell you, *That it is a fooliſh thing to limit the power of Nature, and to ſay, her Laws extend to ſome things only, and not to all?*

L. Your Author ſpeaks herein, as little like a good *Philoſopher*, as a good *Jew*, or a good *Chriſtian*. If the Laws of Nature are fix'd and immovable, they may be obſerv'd; and the Obſervation of them, we call, *the ſtudy of Natural Philoſophy*. To ſay therefore with your Author, *That the Courſe of Nature is fixed and immutable, and yet that her power extends to all things*; is a contradiction in the very Terms: for if ſhe could do all things, ſhe could alter her ſetled Courſe, and move in an Order quite contrary to what now ſhe ſteers. Nor does he mend the matter, by aſſerting in the ſame page, *That the (fixed) Laws of Nature, extend to all things that are comprehended in the Divine Underſtanding*. For the Divine Underſtanding muſt needs comprehend as well what is *impoſſible* as what

Potentiam Naturæ infinitam eſſe omnino credendum eſt.

what is *possible to be done*; and the *Mutability*, as well as the *Fixation of the Rules of Motion in material Bodies*: into such *notorious Absurdities* does your Author run, whilst he endeavours to destroy the credibility of Miracles, by jumbling together the Names of God and Nature.

S. If there be a *fixed Course of Nature*, how can there be a *Miracle*, which is neither more nor less than an *interruption of it?*

L. Because it is fixed by a Superior Intelligent Being, who can unfix the same, when it is for his own Glory, or the General Benefit of Mankind. If Nature did not keep, for the most part, a setled Course, we could have *no distinct Notion of a Miracle*; but she is so steady, that she gives us time to view her, and from that view to frame such *Axioms of Possibility and Impossibility*, as are as evident to our Reason, as any of those principles, which some (tho I fear not truly) do stile *Innate Notions*.

S. I am still of my *Author*'s mind, *That we call those works Miracles, whose natural Causes we do not understand.*

L. No: We rather call that work a *Miracle*, which we know is done, not by a Natural, but by the immediate Energy of some Supernatural Power. For the Course of Nature being steady, nothing is more

eaſie than to obſerve, when her Courſe is broken; *i. e.* when ſomething is done, that we are ſure is repugnant *to thoſe fixed Rules* which ſhe is bound to obſerve in all other caſes.

S. Prithee what are thoſe Rules? How do you know that they have ever been broken?

L. The firſt Rule, *Ex nihilo, nihil fit*; *Out of nothing, there can come nothing*; is as clear by its own light, as any One Propoſition we can eaſily frame unto our ſelves. Either therefore Matter made it ſelf; that is, it was a Cauſe before it did exiſt, which is a Wild Abſurdity, or it was made by a Superior Being, and its very *Production the beginning of Miracles.* We all know that *mutations of bodies* may be made by the regular Laws of *motion*; but that Matter ſhould make it ſelf, or be produced *out of nothing* by her own Laws of *motion*, is repugnant to the *common ſenſe of mankind.* If Matter therefore was made, there was a time when it did not exiſt, and therefore its motion from *non exiſtence* to *exiſtence*, could not be according to any fixed Rule of Nature, which had then no being, and conſequently God did not always work by fixed and unalterable Rules, to which the very *Notion of Creation* is directly repugnant.

S.

S. You ramble too wide from our preſent purpoſe: Can you prove that any thing yet was ever done, ſince the *Creation*, that was certainly repugnant to any One fixed Law of Nature? which may be a ſufficient Teſtimonial to a man, that he is ſent from God.

L. It is a Maxim in Reaſon, *That one body acts upon another by Contaction or Protruſion only.* If two bodies were placed never ſo near, and *no contiguous body between*, they might remain to all Eternity in that poſture, without affecting each other, or producing any alteration in them. If therefore any man can produce an alteration in bodies, by the ſole word of his mouth, all men will conclude this man does act by virtue of a Supernatural Power. When therefore the Children of *Iſrael* ſaw *Moſes turning water into blood*, or *bringing Lice and Frogs*, &c. *upon the Land of Egypt*, *by the lifting up his Rod*; or *our Saviour curing diſeaſes by the word of his mouth*, or *raiſing men from the dead*, &c. they muſt conclude that this was done by *a ſpiritual*, and not by *a material power*, which can cauſe *no alteration on another body*, *but by Contraction*, *or Emiſſion of minute Particles*, the ſecret Operations of which, do *conſtitute the whole body of Natural Magick*. Now if the *moving of the Wand*, or *ſpeaking a few words*,

did produce the *wondrous Effects* but now mentioned, in the *production, or alteration of bodies*, by the *ſole force of Nature*, they would do it always, when utter'd or apply'd after the ſame manner; becauſe the Laws of Nature are fixed and immovable. But ſince we ſee they have done it, but cannot do the ſame thing again, we very rationally conclude, *that theſe alterations were made in Bodies by a Spiritual and a Superior Power.* Your *Author* therefore muſt not think to ſham us off with a Wild Pretence, *That what we call Miracles, were ſome ſtrange works of Nature, ſo called with reſpect to the ignorance of the Vulgar:* For we are willing the Miracles upon which *our Religion is grounded*, ſhould be tryed by the *moſt known Axioms of Natural Philoſophy*, and challenge the *whole Race of Epicurean Atomiſts*, to ſhew how they could be done, according to any *Hypotheſis* that ever yet was framed, of the *Mechanical Laws of Motion.*

S. Does not my *Author* clearly demonſtrate, *That the Sun's ſtopping his courſe, of which we read in the Book of* Joſhua, *was nothing elſe but a refraction of Light, the Sky being then full of Hail?* And the like may be ſaid of the *Dial of Ahaz.*

L. Your *Author* boldly ſays much; but he *proves nothing.* The *ſtanding ſtill of the Sun,*

Sun, or the *prolongation of Light by any other means*, whether Natural or Miraculous, would have been equally beneficial to the *Iſraelites*, in *affording them time to ſlay their Enemies*. But becauſe it would be greater Encouragements to the *Iſraelites*, to ſee God himſelf aſſiſting them in a *miraculous manner*, and the Scriptures do relate this as a Miracle; and ſince *no ſufficient Reaſon* can be given, *why the Sun ſhould ſtop his Courſe*, (*or the Earth ſtand ſtill*, which in the Effects is the ſame thing) unleſs by *the immediate Power of God*, we have more Reaſon to believe the Scripture-Narrative, than the *improbable Conjecture of your daring Author*. For why muſt we needs conclude, *That becauſe it was poſſible the Children of* Iſrael *might be deceived, that therefore they certainly were ſo*? Or how is it probable, *that the Air being full of Hail, ſhould make a whole Nation believe that the day was longer than it ought to be*?

S. Suppoſe the Earth did ſtand ſtill, does it therefore follow it muſt be a Miracle? Might there not be a *Concourſe of groſſer Particles of Matter*, in the Liquid Ether, that might ſtop its *Courſe for a Seaſon*, without the *interpoſition of a miraculous Power*?

L. Since we have no infallible Knowledg of all the poſſible motions that may hap-

pen in the Celeſtial matter, we cannot conclude that New alterations therein, are the immediate effects of a ſupernatural Power. But ſince we are ſure, that one body works upon another, by contaction only, we are ſure that *Joſhua's* Prayer could by no force of Nature, cauſe the continuance of the Sun upon the *Horizon*, beyond the uſual time. But alas, we do not ſeek for Miracles in the Heavens above, nor in the Seas beneath, moſt Fruitful of amazing Prodigies. We appeal to the moſt approved Axioms of Natural Philoſophy, as the Teſts of the truth of thoſe Miracles, upon which our Religion is grounded. He that admits the Hiſtorical part of Revealed Religion to be true, as your Author does more than once, can never pretend to ſolve all that is therein recorded, by Natural cauſes, without running into abſurdities of the groſſeſt Nature. In complyance to his own Hypotheſis, he muſt believe that the Courſe of Nature is ſettled: and yet in complyance to the Hiſtorical Account of the Scriptures, he muſt believe that words can cure Diſeaſes, and raiſe the Dead, *&c.* And yet that the ſame words, ſpoken by another Perſon, cannot do it, *i. e.* That the Courſe of Nature is ſettled, and that it is not ſettled, but moves at random. He

muſt

muſt admit that one inanimate Body, Acts upon another only by contaction; And he muſt admit, that words have made alteration in inanimate Bodys, which yet can cauſe no other contaction, than what ariſes from the modulation of the Air. He muſt believe it to be a Law of Nature, *That the Dead cannot be raiſed up to Life, becauſe that is known to be above her uſual Courſe, and he muſt believe that the Dead have been reſtored to Life, by Virtue of a Divine Command.* In ſhort, your Authors endeavour to ſolve Miracles by Natural cauſes, is ridiculous to the higheſt Degree, for he attacks reveal'd Religion in that place, which is of all others moſt impregnable; if the Sparks of your Principles, did believe that *Moſes* and the Prophets, and our Saviour, did really do all thoſe mighty things recorded of them, by a due application of Natural cauſes, why do not they attempt to do the ſame? Or why do they laugh at all others who do attempt it, as Fools and Madmen? And how does it happen, that no ſuch things were ever well atteſted to have been done by other Perſons, who have made Experimental Philoſophy their ſtudy, with good ſucceſs? And how comes it to paſs, that they are repugnant and irreconcilable to all the Axioms of Philoſophy, that hitherto have been Written, that

that the more any Learned Man conſiders them, the more he finds of a Natural impoſſibility in them? And why can't your Author find out as eaſy and probable a ſolution, of all the *Signs and Wonders*, wrought by our Saviour, as of the ſtanding ſtill of the Sun, or the Paſſage of the Children of *Iſrael* over the Red Sea?

S. My Author is a wiſer Man, than to believe all the ſtrange Stories to be literally true, which you read in your Bibles. He tells you, that whatſoever is there reported to be done, which cannot poſſibly be aſcribed to Natural cauſes, is to be preſumed as thruſt in by malicious deſigning men. And that in telling Wonders, the Scriptures ſpeak to the Fancy, but not to the Reaſon of mankind.

L. Nothing ſpeaks leſs to the fancy, than the Chriſtian Religion, which in its Doctrines and Precepts too, is altogether perfective of humane reaſon. But if your Author denies his aſſent to the Hiſtorical part of the Bible, and only in ſome places pretends to give it, to pleaſe the States of *Holland*, why does he give no reaſon for his diſſent? For one ſubſtantial reaſon, would be ſufficient in this caſe, to overthrow the whole bulk of reveal'd Religion? Why does he not ſhew, that no man can have any certainty of any matter of Fact,

Fact, unleſs he ſee it done with his own Eyes? Why does he not prove that Number, and probity of Witneſſes are no ſufficient motives to aſſent? VVhy does he not produce ſome Teſtimonies of Witneſſes, that may invalidate the credit of theſe, who have recorded the Miracles of our *B. S.* or of his Apoſtles? There is certainly no more obvious way of ruining reveal'd Religion, than the diſproving thoſe relations of Miracles, upon which its rational Evidence, is moſt ſtrongly grounded. Either therefore your Author could find nothing to ſay on this topick, or elſe through inadvertency, he has omitted thoſe Arguments, which are moſt conducive to ſupport ſo bad a cauſe.

S. It is enough that he demonſtrated before, that the Power of God and Nature being the ſame, there can be no ſuch thing as a Miracle.

L. An Hiſtorical Account, is to be refuted in an Hiſtorical manner, not by Foreign Arguments, which have no force to refute a matter of Fact. We urge the Teſtimony of a ſufficient Number of highly creditable Witneſſes, that Miracles have been done; your Author denys all, becauſe according to his reaſon, it is impoſſible any ſuch thing ſhould be. This is juſt as if a blind man ſhould endeavour

to

to confute all thoſe who teſtify there is ſuch a thing as light, by giving his reaſons that oblige him to think, that there can be no ſuch thing. VVhen a thing is well atteſted to have been done, it is a vain attempt to make men Renounce their ſenſes, in complyance to his reaſon.

S. You think you have gained a great point, when you have brought a man to acknowledge, the reality of your boaſted Miracles; But alas, you fight for that which can do you no good when you have gain'd it. For Miracles can never make us underſtand, either the Eſſence or Exiſtence, or Providence of God.

L. According to my Notion of a Miracle, it is a work that is done by the immediate Finger of God, and that a work we know to be done by God alone, ſhould not ſo much as render us certain of the Exiſtence of a God, is to me an unaccountable Riddle. Again, a Miracle is a work that we know cannot be done, according to the Mechanical Laws of matter and motion, but is therefore aſcribed to a free, Spiritual and Powerful Agent, and yet that all this ſhould be no demonſtration of the Spirituality, Freedom, and Power of the Divine Nature, is to me the 2d part of the ſame Riddle. Again, a miracle is a work that is wrought, to give ſome men

a

a Teſtimonial, that they are ſent on ſome errand by God, to his Creature man, and yet that this ſhould be no Argument of Gods Providence, nor at all prove that he takes any care of mankind, is the third and laſt part of the Riddle, which I humbly beg you would be pleaſed to unfold to me.

S. That I will, and very briefly too. We gather the Exiſtence of God, from known and received Notions, but if there were any ſuperiour Power, that could alter theſe Notions, it muſt neceſſarily deſtroy the very knowledge of a God, or at leaſt compel us to doubt of his Exiſtence.

L. It is not by Miracles, but by the very light of Nature that we underſtand, that there is a Being, ſuperiour to our Faculties, who can alter them for the better or the worſe, according as he pleaſes. But then the ſame reaſon tells us, that Truth is one of his moſt adorable perfections, and from thence we conclude, that he has given us right Faculties, and will not become the Author of deceit. But it ſeems, your Author thinks, that he can never be ſecure of the Truth of his Faculties, if he ſhould once believe that there is a God, who is a Powerful and Voluntary Agent.

S. No, there is a further reaſon, for if any thing be repugnant to Nature, it is repug-

repugnant to thoſe firſt Principles, from whence we conclude the Exiſtence of Nature it ſelf. And what certainty is there, if you deſtroy firſt Principles?

L. A Miracle is ſo far from being repugnant to firſt Principles, that it is altogether declarative of them. Is it not to be admitted as a firſt Principle in reaſon, *That there is a God who made the World*?

S. Heavens forbid I ſhould deny it.

L. And that can annihilate the World?

S. I ſee no reaſon to deny it.

L. If then alteration of ſome part of the Univerſe, be leſs than annihilation, you muſt grant it poſſible, and what then is there in a Miracle, that is repugnant to the firſt and moſt obvious Principles of Reaſon?

S. But he tells you, that whether a Miracle be a work, either which proceeds from Natural cauſes, which cannot be explained, or has no other cauſe than the immediate Will of God, yet ſtill it exceeds the reach of humane underſtanding, and we can underſtand nothing from that, which exceeds the very Standard of our Faculties.

L. There is nothing in a Miracle, that exceeds the bounds of humane underſtanding, but only the manner of the Divine Operation in the Production of it. Our

ſenſes

ſenſes bear Witneſs that the work is done, and our reaſon concludes, that none but God could do it. But we do not know the manner of the Divine Operation: Nor no more do we comprehend the manner of the Divine Operation in the Creation of the World; but does it therefore follow, that Creation, becauſe it exceeds the bounds of humane underſtanding, can give us no true knowledge of the Eſſence, Exiſtence, or Providence of God?

S. I cannot well anſwer your laſt Argument; but in the 72*d* page, I think my *Author* argues very well; *viz. That if any thing was done, above the power of Nature, or contrary to Nature, it would be repugnant to that Order, which God has appointed by univerſal Laws to be eternal; and the belief of ſuch a thing would make us doubt of all things, and bring us at laſt to Atheiſm.*

L. And pray why ſo? What do you underſtand by Nature, but thoſe *Laws of Motion by which God does preſerve the Univerſe in that Beauty and Order wherein we now enjoy it*? Theſe we acknowledge to be ſufficient to give us knowledge of the Exiſtence and Wiſdom of God, vvhich vvould be knovvn by the *Work of his hands*, tho there vvere no ſuch thing as a *Miracle*. Nor do vve ſay, *That a Miracle is abſolutely neceſſary to puniſh ill men, or to reward the good*;

good; God can do that by his Providence, and the ſetled Courſe and Order of things: And though God does it by *Miracles* ſometimes, yet that is not for *want of Power to do it otherwiſe*, but only that theſe *Miracles* may the more be conſidered as *Teſtimonials of a Divine Miſſion*. Tho therefore the frequent interruption of the ſetled Courſe of Nature, would render the Endeavours of thoſe Vain, who gave their minds to the ſtudy of *Natural Philoſophy*; yet the interruption of it at ſome certain *Times and Seaſons*, when God is pleaſed to communicate ſome particular meſſage to mankind, is *no obſtruction to the ſtudy of Nature*, and is a great and neceſſary introduction to a compleater knowledge of the Will of God. For what proportion of time is there between the Miraculous Ages of *Moſes* and our Saviour, and the duration of the VVorld? And how ſmall is the Number of well atteſted Miracles, in reſpect to all the other works of Nature?

S. Suppoſe there were real Miracles, yet my Author proves from Scripture, that they can lead us into no true Knowledge of God. *For a Prophet of the falſe Gods, might work Signs, and Wonders, and yet deſerve to be Stoned for his pains.* See *Deut.* 13. 1, 2, 3. Verſes.

L.

L. A Miracle is an appeal to our ſenſes, that what is done, is not done by any Viſible or Material Being. But becauſe there are Bad, as well as Good Inviſible Agents, we are to Judge of the reality of a Miracle, by the Good or ill Doctrines, which it is alledged to ſupport. The *Magicians* of *Pharaoh*, and the *Pagan Prieſts* in all Ages, alledged Miracles, to deſtroy the true Notion of a God, and to looſen all the ſacred Bonds of Morality, but neither were theſe Miracles well atteſted, nor were they to be regarded, becauſe they tended only to deſtroy and corrupt Natural Religion, and Natural honeſty too. And indeed the *Pagan* Superſtition, ſeems to me to have been nothing elſe but a Diabolical Revelation of certain Names of Deities, Rites, and Ceremonies, as might keep men furtheſt from God, and corrupt that *Idea* of him, which is eaſy enough to be deduced from the Light of Nature. It is very plain, that they knew not the Original of their own Religious Rites and Ceremonies, for ſo ſays *Antigone* in *Sophocles*.

ὥς ἄγραπτα κἀσφαλῆ θεῶν.
νόμιμα δύναθαι θνητὸν ὄντ' ὑπερδραμεῖν.
οὐ γάρ τινυν καχθὲς ἀλλ' ἀεί ποτε
ζῇ ταῦτα κ' οὐδεὶς οἶδεν ἐξ σῖου φάνῃ. *Sophoc in Antigone.*

 Why

Why ſhould a Mortal break immortal Laws,
Not made by Man, but by the Gods themſelves?
That ever muſt remain, tho none can know
The Fountain whence thoſe laſting Rivulets flow.

Nor indeed, is it any wonder that they ſhould not know the Original of thoſe Rites and Ceremonies; which have no Foundation in Nature, nor were ſo much as of humane inſtitution, but ſhuffled into the world by the Tricks and Impoſtures of Evil Spirits. But tho Evil Spirits may be Authors of ſome things that look like Propheſies, Miracle, or Inſpiration, yet they never can nor will do any thing to eſtabliſh a Religion, that gives a true Notion of God, and Teaches a rational worſhip of him, and tends to the good and benefit of mankind. If therefore we have diſtinct Notions of Moral Good and Evil, and of Natural Religion, we muſt have diſtinct Notions of the uſual Effects of Good and of Evil Spirits. The *Jews* were very ſenſible, that one Evil Spirit might by Colluſion give place, or at leaſt ſeem to give place to another; and thence maliciouſly concluded, *That our Saviour caſt out Devils*

vils by Belzebub, *the Prince of Devils.* But our Saviours Answer is sufficient, *Viz. If Satan be divided against himself, how shall his Kingdom stand, because ye say, that I cast out Devils by* Belzebub? *i. e.* If I, who teach the true Worship of the true God, cast out Devils by Satan, then Satan is his own Enemy, and Industriously destroys his own Idolatrous Kingdom, which with so much pains he has planted in the World. Mat. 4.

3. If there was so much force in Miracles, as you do pretend, methinks, the Miraculous Age of *Moses*, should have been most Religious of all others, but your own Bibles shew, *That the Israelites fell immediately into the Idolatrous Worship of the Golden Calf, Notwithstanding the Number of* Moses's *pretended Miracles.* p. 73.

L. The *Jews* living in the midst of Idolatrous Nations, and Newly Emancipated from *Egyptian* Slavery, might be tempted to Act contrary to their reason, in complyance to the corrupt customes of those who liv'd round about them. But I do not think, that thereby they thought to relinquish the Worship of the true God, but rather to change the manner of it: Or if they did, yet they were quickly recalled by *Moses* to the true Worship of God. And this must be granted by your Author,

to be very much for the honour of Reveal'd Religion, *That the Worſhip of one God, was not the Legal Religion of any one Nation, but that of the* Jews *only.*

S. I ſtill fear, that the Scriptures, by Gods doing a thing, do mean no more, than his permitting it to be done by the ordinary Courſe of Nature. For (*Sam.* 1. 9. Chap. 15. 16. verſes). *God is ſaid to tell* Samuel *in his Ear, that he would ſend* Saul *unto him, and yet it appears, that* Saul *came to him, as led by Natural Motives,* Viz. *to ſeek his Fathers Aſſes.* In the 105 *Pſ.* 24*th* Verſe. It is ſaid, *God turned the hearts of the* Egyptians, *to hate his People; in the firſt of* Exodus, *a Natural cauſe is render'd of that averſion.*

p. 75.

L. Suppoſe you ſhould hear a poor man, that has receiv'd an Alms of a ſtranger, ſay to himſelf, *God has ſent me relief*; Could you from hence conclude, that this Poor Man believ'd, *That God never was the Author of a Miracle, but always wrought by Natural cauſes?*

S. I muſt confeſs, I ſee no reaſon for ſuch a concluſion.

L. No more ought your Author ridiculouſly to conclude, that becauſe the Scripture ſpeaks of ſome Natural things, as done by God, therefore God never works in a Supernatural manner. *For tho* Saul

ſeems

ſeems to be led to Samuel *by Natural cauſes, yet the prediction to* Samuel, *that* Saul *ſhould certainly come to him, that he ſhould be King of* Iſrael, *muſt needs be aſcribed to a Supernatural Power. The Heart of the* Egyptians *was turned againſt the Children of* Iſrael, *becauſe they feared their Numbers*; But what natural reaſon can be given of all thoſe other Signs and Wonders, which are reckoned up in the ſame *Pſalm*? *Exod.* 1.

S. I muſt confeſs ingenuouſly, that if all things were done by *Moſes* and our Saviour, in that exact manner, according to which they are related, it is impoſſible to give a ſolution of them by Natural cauſes, eſpecially, if Natural cauſes do always work in a fixt and unmoveable order. But my Author very judiciouſly ſhews, that there are many Circumſtances in a Miracle, which the Scriptures do omit, eſpecially, when they are Sung in a Poetic Stile, which if they were expreſſed, would plainly ſhew, that what we now admire as Supernatural, was only an effect of Natural cauſes: And not only ſo, but many Circumſtances of the Miracles recorded, do ſhew that they required Natural cauſes, to bring them to perfection. See *Exod.* 9. *v.* 10. *Moſes could not bring boyls upon the* Egyptians, *without firſt throwing up Aſhes in the Air.* And *Exod.* 14.

21. We read, *That the Red Sea was divided by a ſtrong East Wind.* Eliſha *lay upon the Child, that was ſuppoſed to be Dead, and ſo reviv'd him by the heat of his Body.* In ſhort, if any thing is reported in Scripture, that is directly repugnant to the Laws of Nature, or cannot follow from them, my Authors opinion is, that it is added by ſome Sacrilegious Perſons, who deſign'd to impoſe a Fable upon the World.

L. A tedious relation of impertinent Circumſtances, is avoided by all Judicious, and Faithful Hiſtorians. But to omit Circumſtances that are material, and the Knowledge of which alters the very Nature and Denomination of an Action, is a Trick only of knaves and impoſtors. If therefore *Moſes* and the *Evangeliſts*, in thoſe Books which are plainly Hiſtorical, did deſignedly omit thoſe Circumſtances of Action, which would have convinced the world, that thoſe were only the Works of Nature, which they would make the world believe were the very immediate Works of God, whatever credit their Writings might have met with in After-Ages, they could have found none in their own. For the *Jews* that ſaw what was done by *Moſes*, would have known by the Circumſtances of the Actions,

ons, that were designedly omitted, that whatever he might pretend, there was nothing in them, but what was effected by the sole Power of Nature: And how then could he have perswaded the *Jews* of his own Age, that he was sent from God? Or how could he have made so many false Revelations publick, in the sight of the whole Nation? And why should they be such Fools, as to erect a Government in Church and State, upon a Foundation, which they of that Age must needs have known to be too weak to support it? With what Face could our Saviour, tell the *Jews* of his Age, that his works testify'd of him, if there was nothing in them Miraculous, but what was made so to appear by the partial and the unfaithful Relation of his own Friends and Disciples. It is a false Insinuation of your Author, that Miracles are for the most part Sung in a Poetick manner; for they are historically related, as motives to the credibility of reveal'd Religion; and tho some of them are recited in the *Psalms*, yet the very Poetick Stile of *David*, does not render them more wonderful, than the plain Historical Account of *Moses*. But with what impudence, if not affected ignorance, does your Author Affirm, that the Circumstances of some Actions, recorded as Miracles in Scripture,

do ſhew that they were effected by Natural Cauſes. *When* Moſes *brought a Boyl upon the* Egyptians, *by throwing up Aſhes into the Air, the Action was as Miraculous, as if without throwing up the Aſhes, he had only in the Name of God, commanded the Boyl to ſeize upon the Bodies of the* Egyptians. Unleſs your Author can Philoſophically prove, that according to the ſetled Courſe and Order of Nature, of which he prates ſo much, one man by ſcattering a little Duſt or Aſhes in the Air, might bring Scabs and Boyls to infeſt a whole Nation, We read, *That the Locuſts came upon the Land of* Egypt *with a ſtrong* Eaſt-wind, *and were driven away with a* Weſt-wind, *both were done at the lifting up of the Rod, and the intreaty of* Moſes, *which we all know, are no Natural means of bringing up, or driving away the* Locuſts, *but ſuch as render'd the Action as Miraculous, as if God had Created* Locuſts, *in the ſight of the* Egyptians *to plague them.* The like is to be ſaid *of our Saviours curing the blind man, by anointing his Eyes with Clay made of his Spittle, which the* Jews *acknowledged to be a Miracle, and ſo muſt your Author too, unleſs he will undertake to cure blindneſs by application of the ſame remedy.* But your Author is now come to his laſt remedy, *Viz.* To deny the whole Hiſtory of *Moſes* and the

Exod. 9. 10. *v.*

Exod. 10. *v.* 14. *v.* 19.

Pro-

Prophets, and our *S.* where it does at all oppoſe his Doctrine of Material, or Corporeal neceſſity; and therefore ſince he alledges no reaſons for his diſſent, I ſhall alledge none to refute him; but refer you for ſatisfaction to thoſe many Excellent Treatiſes, that have been wrote upon that Subject.

S. My Author ſhews, that your own Bibles do aſſert, that the Courſe of Nature is fixed and immutable. So you read in the 148*th Pſalm. He hath alſo Eſtabliſhed them*, (i.e. the heavens) *for ever and ever*; *he hath made a decree which ſhall not paſs.*

L. All that you can infer from hence, is this, *Viz.* That the Heavens are of a long duration the *Hebrews* making no difference between Eternity and a very long Continuation of Time. Or at moſt, that ſome of the Cœleſtial Bodys, will not be diſſolved — and that the very Heavens are ſo Subject to the Decrees and Laws of God, that no caſual Concourſe of Atoms, ſhall be able to reſiſt his will.

S. But Pray obſerve the Words of *Solomon*, the greateſt Philoſopher of the *Jewiſh* Nation, *Eccleſ.* 1. 9, and 10. verſes. *The thing which hath been, it is that which ſhall be, and that which is done, is that which ſhall be done, and there is no new thing under the Sun.* 10. *Is there any thing whereof it*

may

may be ſaid, this is new? it hath been already of old time, which hath been before us, &c.

L. If you would be pleaſed to caſt your Eye upon the 8th verſe of that Chapter, you will find that *Solomon* is there ſpeaking of the toyl, labour, and fatiety of all Worldly Enjoyments, in which nothing is New, but the old Vexations of Humane Life, return continually upon us——as *Virgil* not unaptly expreſſes it,

——*Redit labor actus in Orbem.*

But here is not one word, that has any relation to Miracles, nor can by any force of reaſon be diſtorted to that ſenſe. For ſuppoſe *Solomons* meaning is, that nothing was New in his Time, nor would be for the future, what is this to the Doctrine of Miracles? for Miracles were no New Things in the Time of *Solomon*, for they commenced almoſt with the beginning of the World, and therefore they might happen again and again, and yet no new thing be done in the World.

S. But what think you, of the 14th verſe of the third Chapter of *Eccleſ. I know that whatſoever God doeth, it ſhall be for ever, nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it, and God doeth it, that men ſhould fear before him.*

L.

L. I think thereby *Solomon* declares what we all acknowledge, *viz. The Perfection and Stability of all the Works of Nature, which nothing can alter but the immediate Power of God, by whom all things were at first Created.* But I can never think, that *Solomon*, who had right conceptions of God, could mean thereby, that God had diveſted himſelf of the Power of Acting contrary to the Laws of Motion of his own making. But only that he does it ſeldom, and not to ſupport the Univerſe, which might continue as it is without it, but to transfer ſome part of his Authority, to thoſe who are Commiſſioned by him.

S. I muſt Ingenuouſly confeſs, you have removed ſeveral of thoſe prejudices, which I have imbibed from this Author, and I begin to ſee more of the reaſonableneſs of aſſenting to reveal'd Religion, than I had before conſidered. But ſtill I would beg your aſſiſtance, to diſpel two doubts, which do much perplex me.

1. The firſt is, ſince Natural Religion is grounded upon Reaſon, why is it not a better guide to Happineſs than reveal'd Religion, which ſtands altogether upon an Hiſtorical baſis?

2. If

2. If the way to happineſs is contained in the Scriptures, which is the beſt way to come to a right underſtanding of them?

L. You impoſe a greater task upon me, than I am able to undergo, after ſo long a fatigue. But if you think it worthy your labour, to meet me at any other convenient Time, I will deliver my Thoughts upon thoſe Subjects, with all the brevity and perſpicuity, that you can expect from me.

S. Your propoſal is fair and generous; I will wait your leiſure to morrow Morning; in the mean time all Happineſs attend you.

Conference V.

S. WEll Sir, have you conſider'd of what laſt Night I propounded to you?

L. Yes, I have, and hope to make it evident unto you, that without Divine Revelation, we had been involved in ignorance, and miſery, and that the Light of Nature, could not have ſhew'd us the way to true Happineſs.

S.

S. That is the thing I desire to hear from you.

L. I hope, you will grant, that the Soul is immortal, and at least capable of a lasting Happiness or Misery.

S. I was always one of those *Deists*, which never did deny it; altho I know there are some who very confidently do.

L. And that the mind of Man cannot be very happy, till it be pretty secure of lasting Joys in a future State, or at least freed from the danger of Living in perpetual torments.

S. I must confess this to be true, of all those who give themselves any tolerable liberty of thinking.

L. Then you will grant also, that the greater certainty men have, both of what true Happiness is, and how it may be obtained, so much the better it is for them.

S. None can doubt it.

L. Then it follows, that the Confirmation of Natural Light, by Revelation, is one of the greatest Benefits that God can in this World bestow upon Mankind.

S. But what Confirmation can reason receive from History? This seems to me, to be like the Suns receiving Light from a farthing Candle.

L.

L. To understand this well, we must consider, that there are as it were 3 Mediums of certainty, by which the mind of Man arrives to the Knowledge of Truth. The first is Reason, which apprehends common, plain, and universal Notions, and draws right conclusions from them. The second is Sense, by which we Judge of the Truth of Matters of Fact, and are certain of what Impressions External objects do make upon our Organs, tho it does discover to us, the true Nature of things, and the third is Revelation, to which we assent, because we are assured it comes from God, the Fountain of Truth: Now tho Reason and Sense, are the only Mediums of certainty in the works of Nature, with which the Scriptures do not directly meddle, yet Reason is defective in shewing us the way to supernatural Happiness in two respects. First, because many things belonging thereunto, are not deducible from reason alone. And Secondly, because many things that are deducible from thence, in their own Nature, yet are not Actually deduced by the Generality of Mankind.

S. Pray, Sir, a little Explanation: You seem now like *Socrates* in *Aristophanes*, to walk upon the Clouds.

L.

L. It is not deducible from reaſon alone, that God will never annihilate the Soul; Or what will be its future State, or that he will forgive great Sins, upon condition of Repentance; or that there are 3 Perſons in the Trinity; or that the Son of God would be Incarnate in the Fleſh; or make ſatisfaction for Sins; with other Articles of the like Nature.

S. But it is deducible, that there is a God, and that he is to be lov'd, and fear'd, and that our Neighbour is not to be injur'd, and that temperance is conducive to preſerve health, wealth, and reputation.

L. But you muſt obſerve, that not one half of Natural Religion, or Morality, that is deducible from reaſon, was ever actually thence deduced by one half of mankind. What is more obvious to reaſon, than the Unity and Spirituality of the Godhead, and what was more common all over the World, than the worſhip of many Deities and Corporeal Repreſentations of the Gods? What attribute in the Divine Nature ſhines more illuſtriouſly to the Eye of Reaſon, than Univerſal Love and Benignity? *And yet that hinder'd not the* Pagans *from burning their Children to* Moloch, *and giving the Fruit of their Bodys, for the Sins of their Souls.* How few were there amongſt their very Philoſophers,

ſophers, who believed the immortality of the Soul? and ſome of them deny'd the difference between Moral Good and Evil.

Nec natura poteſt juſto ſecernere iniquum.

S. Prethee add no more, I am ſatisfy'd that the greateſt part of mankind, live more by ſenſe than by reaſon; and that they never uſe their reaſon any further, than juſt to ſerve the uſes of the Animal Life.

L. Tho therefore reaſon is Natural to all Men, yet it does not follow, that all men are endued with all poſſible degrees of Natural knowledge in Morality, any more than in Mathematicks, where all is deducible from plain and obvious Principles, and yet very few are well verſed in that Noble Science.

S. Why, will you ſay, that there is a greater certainty in Revelation, than in Reaſon?

L. Yes, there is: For Miracles are as ſo many Appeals, both to ſenſe and to reaſon too. The ſenſes hear, or ſee ſomething done, which reaſon tells 'em, is done by the inviſible Power of God, and if by God, then Signs of a Divine Miſſion, in the Perſon that performs them, and if the Miſſion be Divine, the ſame reaſon tells us,

that

that the meſſage muſt needs be true. So that Miracles give Teſtimony to Divine Miſſion. 1. If they be wrought openly, and the effects permanent, to diſtinguiſh them from jugling Tricks and Impoſtures. 2. If they are directly repugnant to ſome known and univerſal Law of Nature, to diſtinguiſh them from mere Natural Wonders. 3. If they are brought to give Teſtimony to ſuch Doctrines, as are not repugnant to Natural Religion, or good manners, to diſtinguiſh them from the deluſions of Evil and Malicious Spirits. And 4*ly*, When they are agreeable to Propheſies, which like ſo many lines, tho drawn at ſeveral times, tend to one center, as it hapned in the Perſon of our *B. S.* now it is evident, that when ſenſe and reaſon both conſpire together, and Act as it were in conſort, it forces the aſſent of all ſorts and degrees of men, more ſtrongly than dry ſpeculation: And therefore ſince it is neceſſary for the Good of Man, that the Will of God ſhould be known, it was convenient it ſhould be made known in ſuch a manner, as would convince the reaſon of the Learned, and the very ſenſes of the leſs thinking part of mankind, and this could be done no other way ſo commodiouſly, as by Propheſie and Miracles.

S. Your reaſon, good Sir, for that?

L. If ſome things neceſſary to be known, are not deducible from reaſon, as it is now, would you have thonght it better, that God ſhould have quite alter'd the frame of humane Nature, and given new faculties to diſcern his Will?

S. No, that would have been too violent a force upon the mind — I do not like that.

L. Would you have had him ſpoken in a ſupernatural way to all mankind? By an immediate voice from Heaven?

S. I cannot but ſee many abſurdities in that wild ſuppoſition.

L. Would you have had him ſpoken to ſome ſelect Perſons, without any Corporeal repreſentations, by the ſole operation of his Spirit?

S. I cannot ſee how that could have mended the matter; for I can no more frame a Notion of certainty in bare Inſpiration, than in the Hieroglyphical repreſentations made to the Ancient Prophets.

L. Would you have had him ſent his Meſſengers on his Errands, without any viſible Power of Propheſie or Miracles, to be believ'd upon their bare word?

S.

S. He might, if it had pleas'd him; but then I do believe very few would have given them credit.

L. Would you have Miracles wrought every day?

S. I should be glad to see a Miracle, or two, for my own satisfaction: But I must confess, if they were very frequent, they would not in a short time be distinguishable from the Works of Nature.

L. Then I perceive you *Scepticks* desire something, but you know not what. For, give your thoughts the utmost liberty of ranging, yet you will never find a more commodious way of Gods speaking to mankind, than that which is recorded in the Scriptures; because it is suited to all the faculties of the Soul, and is apt consequently to force the assent of all mankind: And if we consider the subject matter of it, we shall find, that it reveals to man all those necessary Truths, which are no ways deducible from reason alone; and Secondly, it gives light, perspicuity and luster, to all those Moral Duties, which are indeed deducible by operose deductions from reason, but have not been thence Actually deduced by the less thinking part of mankind.

S. I should have a better Opinion of Scripture, if you could give me some

rules, of interpreting those Ancient Writings; for I had rather go to no Oracle, than to an Oracle that has a double meaning.

L. The obscurity of the Scriptures, is very much insisted upon by the *Romanists*, to make room for an infallible guide and interpreter; and from them taken up by the *Deists*, to destroy all the whole frame of reveal'd Religion. But the Scripture is neither so obscure, as the *Romanists* pretend, nor so absurd as you *Deists* do make it. And First, I think it would be very much to the purpose, to reduce Scripture to those several heads of the Subject matter, that is contained in them. For,

First, For some things are the pure and proper objects of humane reason, in which Natural Religion and Revelation, are not at all concerned; such as are the motion of the Earth or Heavens, and other *Phænomena*'s of the works of Nature. Of these it is not necessary, that the Scripture should speak in the most proper, and the most Philosophical terms. It is enough that it excites us to our duty, by the contemplation of their Beauty and Order; and therefore your Author's Observation of the Errors of the Author of *Joshua*'s History, concerning the motion of the Sun, is little to the purpose, unless he can prove, it was the

design

design of that book, to give us a syſtem of Aſtronomy.

Secondly, Other things in the Scripture deliver'd, are matters of pure Revelation, which reaſon could never diſcover, but receives them as additions to it. Such as are the Doctrine of the Trinity, Incarnation, Sacraments, and the like, which my Lord *Bacon* in his Book, *de augmentis ſcientiarum*, wiſhes reduced into one Body, that ſo we might diſtinctly view, what knowledge is altogether ſupported by Divine Revelation, and what is owing to the unerring rules of humane reaſon: For whatſoever is deliver'd by Revelation, is to be received with the ſame firmneſs of aſſent, as a firſt Principle, but with this difference, that we may ſafely venture to draw legitimate concluſions, from firſt Principles of reaſon; but we muſt be more modeſt in matters of mere Revelation, leſt otherwiſe we wade beyond our depth. For here we muſt acquieſce in nothing but the Scriptures.

Thirdly, Other matters are intelligible, by Reaſon and by Revelation too, as viſible by a double Light. Thus the whole ſubſtance of the Decalogue, excepting only the Circumſtantial part, of the preciſe time of worſhip in the Sabbath, and our Saviour's Divine Sermon in the Mount, and other

precepts of morality, are ſo many branches of Natural Religion. Revelation only confirms, what reaſon, as it were, gueſſed at before, and makes that obvious to the meaneſt capacity, which before was known to the more thinking part of mankind, and adds the certainty of future rewards and puniſhments, which alone can engage a man to act with vigour. And therefore we rightly enough interpret moral duties, by known Principles of humane reaſon. For otherwiſe, we ſhould run into many abſurdities, by adhering to the very Letter of the Decalogue its ſelf. If we do not interpret the 2d Commandment in this manner, every Picture in our Houſes, every Sign in our Streets, would be ſo many breaches of the Divine Commandment; *Thou ſhalt not make to thy ſelf any Graven Image, nor the Likeneſs of any thing*, &c. All Executions of Criminals, and ſlaying of men in a juſt War, would be downright Murthers, if the Commandment, *Thou ſhalt not kill*, was to be taken in a ſtrict and literal ſenſe, nay, the Scriptures would contradict themſelves, when in ſome caſes, they command Criminals to be put to Death.

Fourthly, Other things are Matters of Hiſtory. Such as are the Narrations of what hapned to the *Jews*, and what Propheſies

phesies and Miracles were wrought amongst them. And of these we Judge, as of other Matters of Fact, *Viz.* By the Number and Credibility of Witnesses. And here we appeal to the common sense of mankind, for these Miracles which are History to us, to those who saw them, were matters of sense. *The Wisdom of God, is wrapt up in the Scriptures*, as it is in the works of Nature, and is thence to be deduced, by observing Method and Order, without which all things appear to the understanding, without shape, or beauty.

S. Is this all you would advise?

L. No. I would be glad to see, if the work were possible, an Authentick History, Synchronical, with all parts of those sacred Writings. For want of this, many have carp'd at *Moses*'s History, who yet can find out nothing so Ancient, nor so agreeable to all the remnants of past events, that were preserved in the Fables or Histories of *Pagan* Writers. Where we have a Synchronical History, it agrees very well with the Prophesies of *Daniel*, and no doubt, but if an Account could be found, of whatever hapned to the Neighbouring Nations about *Palestine*, it would clear many Passages in the other Prophets, which now seem trifling, absurd, or unintelligible.

S. What do you think, of an exact Knowledge of the *Hebrew* words, and all the Idioms of that Language?

L. I think it very uſeful, but that defect is ſufficiently ſupplied to the Vulgar, by faithful Tranſlations of Learned Men. I therefore in the laſt place would recommend, what is touched upon by your Author, an exact Hiſtory of the Books of the Scripture, *viz.* By whom written, for what end, at what time, what was the Natural diſpoſition, abilities, and qualities of the reſpective Pen-Men (for Authors I muſt not call them) with other Circumſtances of the like Nature.

S. Then I perceive you will agree with my Author in the manner of interpreting, tho not in the Divine Authority, of thoſe ſacred Writings.

L. So far as it agrees with truth and no farther. I approve of a Collection of thoſe places that ſeem to agree, and of thoſe which ſeem to be moſt repugnant. But then I do not infer from thence, that the Opinions of the ſacred Writers were really repugnant; becauſe then ſome of them muſt have been falſe, and to aſcribe falſehood to inſpired Writers, is the ſame thing as to aſcribe it to God himſelf: And becauſe I find no ſeeming oppoſition in thoſe Writings, which may not be reconciled,

Vid p. 86.

by

by an exact knowledge of the Language, compariſon with the Context, and Attention to the true Scope and Deſign of Holy Perſons. As for what your Author ſays, that we are not to reject the literal ſenſe of any inſpired Pen Men, becauſe it is abſurd, ſince in ſpeculative matters they are guilty of great abſurdities, it is not to be admitted by a rational Man. In thoſe things indeed, which are intelligible from Principles of reaſon as well as Revelation, if any thing is plainly abſurd and impoſſible to reaſon, we may and ought to fly to a Metaphorical ſenſe and meaning. But we muſt not do ſo in matters of mere Revelation, becauſe they being deducible from no Principle of Reaſon, we are not competent Judges of what is abſurd or poſſible in them, but we give aſſent to them, for no other cauſe, than becauſe they are delivered by God. Nor do I wiſh for an Hiſtorical Account, of the Lives and Diſpoſitions of the Ancient Prophets, that from thence, like your Author, I may aſcribe what I think to be erroneous, to the Education, Ignorance, or Stupidity of the Prophet, becauſe Inſpiration equals the underſtandings of Men, and leaves nothing to Natural abilities, but only the manner of expreſſion; And that I muſt confeſs, might be gueſſed at from ſuch an

Hiſto-

Hiſtorical Account of the Books, and the reſpective Pen-Men.

S. I have heard you hitherto, with ſome delight and ſatisfaction, but I fear you will not be able, to aſſign any better method of interpreting Scripture, than that which is propounded by my judicious Author. For as nothing unfolds Nature better than a Natural-Hiſtory, ſo is Scripture beſt interpreted by a Hiſtory of the Scripture it ſelf. And this Hiſtory muſt not only contain the Properties and Idioms of the Original Languages, in which they were at firſt Written, (of which we have diſcourſed ſomething already) but ſecondly, a Collection of the ſentences of each Book, which are reducible to the ſame General Head; that ſo Scripture may not be expounded by any Notions of reaſon, but by ſentences Collected from its ſelf.

L. I cannot ſee how this can at all advance the deſign of the Author.

S. Then I will open your underſtanding with a clear inſtance. *Moſes ſays in one place, that God is a fire, and in another, that he is a Jealous God.* Now you Divines, would preſently conclude, that fire was to be taken in a Metaphorical ſenſe, becauſe it is contrary to Natural reaſon, to think, *That an immaterial God, ſhould be a material fire:* Not conſidering, *that* Moſes

p. 86.

might

might teach, that God is a fire, tho that Doctrine is absurd, and contrary to reason. And unless the word fire, in the 31st of *Job* and the 12th verse, had been put to signify wrath or Jealousy, nothing had been more plain, *Than that* Moses *had taught the* Israelites, *that God was a fire,* i. e. *the refined part of the most sublimated Æther.* Now since *Moses* teaches that God is Jealous, and the Scripture no where says, *That he is void of Passions, thence we may couclude, that* Moses *did believe, or at least was willing to make the simple* Israelites *believe, that there are the same Passions in God as there are in Man.* And pray consider, how many Absurdities there would be in the Christian Religion, if you *Divines*, in Propositions repugnant to common Sense, did not (to save the Credit of your own Profession) fly from a Literal to a Metaphorical Sense and Meaning. p. 87. *Vid. sig.*

L. That Scripture is very well expounded by Scripture, in most Cases, is a Proposition which we are more fond to defend than your very Author; but yet we are unwilling to exclude that use of *common Sense and Reason*, without which it is impossible to understand the meanest Author. When we read any *Historian*, *Orator*, or *Poet*, we readily gues what words are used in a proper, and what in a Translated sense

ſenſe, by the very contexture and poſition of the words, without turning over the whole Hiſtory, Poem, or Oration, to find out a Metaphor, or Catacreſis, that lies open to the firſt veiw of the Reader. And let any Man read the 23d of *Deuteronomy*, and the 23d and 24th verſes, and Judge whether *Moſes* therein could be conceived as teaching the *Iſraelites*, *That God is a real fire, tho* Job *had never ſpake one word of the matter.* 23. *Take heed to your ſelves, leſt you forget the Covenant of the Lord your God, which he made with you, and make you a Graven Image, or the likeneſs of any thing, which the Lord thy God hath forbidden thee.* 24. *For the Lord thy God is a Conſuming Fire, even a Jealous God.* How is it poſſible, *That* Moſes *ſhould be conceived as teaching the* Iſraelites, *that God is real Fire, when in the ſame breath he forbids them to make any likeneſs of him; which the* Iſraelites *muſt needs have done, every time they ſtruck a light, or went to* Oven, *if God had been a real fire.* Suppoſe *Job* had never us'd the word fire in all his complaints, could not the *Iſraelites* have underſtood *Moſes*, when he expreſſes the Activity, and Vehemence of Gods Indignation againſt Idolatry, in ſuch plain words? *Viz. Thy God is a Conſuming Fire, even a Jealous God.* Beſides, with what impudence, does your Author,

Author; expound *Moſes* by *Job*, when according to his *Canons* of Interpretation, *Non licet mentem unius Prophetæ, ex locis clarioribus alterius concludere neque explicare, niſi evidentiſſime conſtet, eos unam eandemque foviſſe ſententiam--We muſt not conclude the mind of one Prophet, from the more expreſs places of another, unleſs we are certain that both were of the ſame Opinion.* And again he tells us, in the 95th page, that we muſt not hope to ſolve all repugnancies in the Scriptures, by comparing one place with another, ſince that only can illuſtrate ſome few places by chance, *Quando quidem nullus propheta eo fine ſcripſit ut verba alterius aut ſua ipſa ex profeſſo explicaret.* No Prophet wrote on purpoſe to explain his own, or another Prophets meaning. p. 9.

S. Methinks it is ſomething odd, to ſay, *That no Prophet wrote any thing to explain his own meaning.*

L. It is no other than your Author obtrudes upon you, under the name of *ſolid Reaſon*, whereas he is full of Inconſiſtencies, and ſeems never to know his own mind. In the 87*th. Pag.* notwithſtanding the illogical deduction of a univerſal Propoſition, from a ſingle inſtance, he concludes from this paſſage of *Moſes*, *That the knowledge of the Scriptures is to be Deduced only from themſelves*; but from the very

next

next Line, to the end of the *Chap.* he contends earneſtly to prove, *That the knowledge of the true Sence of the Scriptures, is to be gained not from the Books themſelves, but from an Hiſtory of the Books, and the various chances that have happned to them, viz.* a Narration of the Lives, Manners, and Affections of the reſpective Pen-Men, who they were, at what time, to whom, and upon what occaſion they wrote each Book; ſo that according to your Author, the Intepretation of Scripture is to be taken from the Scriptures alone, and yet without ſuch an extrinſick Hiſtory, which himſelf confeſſes to be wanting, it is impoſſible to know the true ſenſe of them.

ex ſolis biblii.

S. I muſt confeſs, that my Author is a little too guilty of contradicting himſelf, for great wits have ſhort memories: But ſtill you do not ſhew any Reaſon, why we ſhould not believe *that God, in the Opinion of* Moſes, *was ſubject to Humane Paſſions*, ſince it is no where contradicted in the Scriptures themſelves,

L. Becauſe the Scriptures themſelves do teach, *That God is a Spirit, John* 4. 24. and that conſequently, he cannot be ſubject to Paſſions, which are always accompanied with ſome Perturbations of the Body; and ſince by Nature we have no diſtinct, and Adæquate Comprehenſion of the

the Principles, and manner of Operation of the *Divine Nature*, in diſtributing Rewards, and Puniſhments, it was impoſſible for *Moſes* to expreſs God's firſt Reſolution *of rewarding the Good, and puniſhing the Bad*, in more proper terms than thoſe of Love and Anger, *&c.* Tho therefore thoſe Expreſſions are Figurative, when applied to God, yet ſince they are the moſt proper that we can find, for what we cannot fully underſtand, it is plain that *Moſes* had right Conceptions of God, when in words, he aſcrib'd thoſe Paſſions to him.

S. Then you interpret Scripture by Reaſon.

L. I do not make my Reaſon, the Standard of *Divine Revelation*, but I hope, that I may make the ſame uſe of my Reaſon, in Interpreting Scripture, as you, or any ſenſible Man would do, in Reading any Humane Author.

S. It would be hard to deny you that liberty; beſides I am ſo much a Friend to Truth, that I muſt ingenuouſly confeſs, that it is not plain to me, that *Job* in that place by Fire, does either underſtand Jealouſy or Anger, but rather the crime of *Adultery*, or *Fornication*, for thus he ſpeaks, *v.* 9. *If my heart hath been deceived by a Woman, or if I have laid wait at my Neighbours door; Then let my Wife grind unto another,* *Vid.* Job 31.

other, and let others bow down upon her. For this is an Heinous Crime, yea it is an Iniquity to be punished by the Judges. *For it is a Fire that consumeth to Destruction, and would root out all mine Increase.* Now it seems to me, that it is not Jealousie, which is no very expensive passion, *but the being deceived by a Woman, and the guilt of lying in wait at his Neighbours Door*, which *Job* calls here *a Consuming Fire, that would soon bring Destruction upon his Body and Estate.*

L. And yet your admired Author, makes use of such forc't Interpretations of Scripture, to affix absurdities of his own Invention, to those Sacred Writings, and thereby to destroy their *Divine Authority.* For indeed the whole contexture of the Scriptures, both of the *Old* and the *New Testament*, do give us such clear Notions of the *Unity and Spirituality of the Divine Nature, that they cannot be distorted, to savour any Opinion that is contrary to Natural Religion, without open violence, as well as secret Art and Cunning*: Tho it must be confessed at the same time, that they teach some things above our Reason, because they came from an Author who knows more than in this Life can be understood by us.

S.

S. If you rightly underſtand the Ambiguities of the *Hebrew* Language, which my Author very learnedly reckons up, in the 93. *Pag.* and the great want we have of a certain Hiſtory of the Books themſelves, and the Lives of the Authors, you would eaſily perceive that we know little or nothing of the true ſence of Scriptures, unleſs it be in thoſe places which treat of *Moral Precepts*, for they are ſo plainly Intelligible, that they retain the ſame perſpicuity in all Languages.

L. We know that the Hebrew, as well as all other Languages, is ſubject to ſome Ambiguities, which may create Error, but we do not ſee that theſe Ambiguities are ſo frequent, or of ſuch conſequence, as to ſhake our Belief of any one Fundamental Article of Revealed Religion. But with what Gygantick confidence, would your Aurhor raiſe a Stupendious ſtructure, upon this narrow and rotten Foundation? There are ſome ambiguities, in ſome places, that may ſometimes ariſe, concerning the true meaning of ſome few Texts of Scripture---Therefore we can never be certain of the true meaning of any one Text therein, thoſe only excepted, which contain Moral Precepts, for of thoſe we were certain before hand. But we can never underſtand, from thence, that there

was ſuch a People as the *Jews*, or ſuch a man as *Moſes*, or ſuch a Perſon as our Saviour, who did wonderful things in *Judea*, nor any Apoſtles ſent out by him, for theſe are all ſpeculative matters, which (tho the *New Teſtament* was wrote in *Greek*, yet) are altogether obſcured by the ambiguities of the *Hebrew* Language. Can you think your Author would have deſcended to this abſurd way of arguing, if his cauſe would have bore a better? Is not our Faith on our Saviour, grounded upon plain Narrations of ſuch Matters of Fact, as are as eaſily intelligible in one Language as another, and will not Hiſtory as well bear a Tranſlation as the Problems of *Euclid*? Does not he pretend to expound Scripture by ſome *Hebrew* Hiſtory, (if he could get one for his purpoſe) and yet is all Hiſtory ſo obſcure, that it is impoſſible to be expounded?

S. You cannot deny, but that a Hiſtory of the Lives of the Prophets, would much conduce towards the better underſtanding of Prophetical Writings.

L. It might give light to ſome few places, but is far from being abſolutely neceſſary to expound all. Why may we not as well underſtand the Scriptures, without ſuch a Hiſtory, as the works of *Plato*, or *Cicero*, or *Levy*? Beſides, in what Language

guage muſt this Expounding Hiſtory be wrote? Not in *Hebrew*, for then it muſt be ſubject to the ſame ambiguities, as the Bible it ſelf--Nor in any of the *Eaſtern* Tongues, for then the matter would not be much mended; Nor in any Foreign dialect, for then it would not paſs for Authentick, as wrote by one not skill'd in the *Jewiſh* Affairs. Then by whom muſt this Hiſtory be wrote? By an Author that pretends to be inſpired, then *Spinoſa* will have the ſame prejudice againſt him, as againſt the other Prophets, and Pen-men of the Holy Scripture, whom he expoſes as Mad-Men, and will not allow them to ſay one thing, (unleſs in Morals) that can be underſtood, or that ought to be believed by us: If this Hiſtory is wrote by an Author that pretends to no Inſpiration, tho that one thing might recommend him to *Spinoſa*, yet it will give all thinking men juſt cauſe of caution, that they be not impos'd upon, by a man whom they know to be as fallible as themſelves: And therefore unleſs they can be well ſatisfied, that his integrity is greater, his underſtanding clearer, and his opportunities of knowing all the important Matters of Fact, of thoſe Ages, more advantagious, than thoſe of the Holy Pen-men, they will ſee no reaſon, why they ſhould rather Correct

Scripture by the *Hiſtorian*, than the *Hiſtorian* by Scripture.

S. Ay, but my Author gives you ſuch a Hiſtory of Scripture, as makes all the Pentateuch, Books of *Joſhua*, *Judges*, &c. To appear to be a Novel Invention, moſt likely to be jumbled together by *Eſdras*, as he well Conjectures, and that the other Books of the *Old Teſtament*, received as Canonical, are not of that Antiquity which you Divines aſcribe to them.

L. But then you ſhould conſider, that your Author is a Perſon upon whoſe Judgment we cannot rely, ſince we can have no reaſon to be ſatisfy'd with the integrity, or Authority of ſuch an *Hiſtorian*. How little his integrity is, we have already ſeen, by his pretending to be a *Deiſt*, and to advance the Law of Nature, which conſiſts chiefly in Loving God; when it is plain from his Chapter of Miracles, that he is really an *Atheiſt*, as every man muſt needs be, that holds the infinity, and immutability of the Power of Nature: As alſo by his partial Diſtorture of Scripture, by denying it the ſame liberty of uſing words in a Tranſlated ſenſe, which is given to all other Writings. As for clearneſs of Judgment, which is the ſecond Commendation of an *Hiſtorian*, I cannot ſee how your Author can pretend

to

to that, whom I have ſhew'd, to have laid down ſo many falſe propoſitions, drawn ſo many falſe concluſions, and ſo frequently to have contradicted himſelf. And as for his opportunities of knowing the Matters of Fact, of the moſt grand importance of thoſe Ages, we all know, that he is as ignorant of them as our ſelves, and therefore we had rather believe thoſe who liv'd in Ancient times, and were Eye-Witneſſes of what our Saviour did, or ſuffered for our ſakes, than a Modern upſtart, whom we are ſure can underſtand, at moſt, no more than our ſelves of the matter ?

S. But tho you ſlight his Authority, yet if he can prove by ſolid reaſons, as he attempts in his 8th Chapter, *That the Pentateuch was not wrote by* Moſes, *&c.* You are bound to yield to them, and to deny its Divine Authority.

L. But if his Reaſons, are fallacious, and Conjectural (as I could eaſily demonſtrate, had we Books and leiſure in this place, to go through the Argument, which yet at beſt would be but loſs of time) then you cannot blame me, if I withdraw my aſſent from his Pernicious Doctrines. But to bring matters to a ſhort iſſue. Do you believe, that the Account the Evangeliſts give of the Life of our Saviour, and the Acts of his Apoſtles, is altogether unin-

ligible by the *Hebraiſms*, and various Lections?

S. No, I think no man of common ſenſe or modeſty, will pretend to ſay ſo.

L. Do you think, that all therein recorded of them, could be done by any Natural, or Diabolical Power?

S. You have already demonſtrated the impoſſibility of the firſt, and the abſurdity of the ſecond aſſertion.

L. Then if our *S.* and his Apoſtles, who prov'd their own Divine Miſſion, did bear Teſtimony to the Writings of *Moſes*, and the other Prophets, all your Authors Criticiſms, or Conjectural fancies of *Eſdras*, *Vaniſh into nothing*. For with what truth could our Saviour have ſaid, *Mat.* the 19th and the 7th. *That* Moſes *Commanded to give a Bill of Divorcement, and that* Moſes, *for the hardneſs of their Hearts, ſuffer'd them to put away their Wives?* or St. John 19. 17. *That the Law was given by* Moſes, *if the whole Pentateuch had been a Fiction of* Eſdras? *Our Saviour therefore has confirm'd the Law of* Moſes, *and the Divine Authority of the* Old Teſtament, *by a new addition of Signs and Wonders, impoſſible to be gainſaid by the Cunning, or Malice of Man.*

S. You have now given me full ſatisfaction, concerning the Divine Authority of

of the Scriptures, into a diſlike of which I was led by the Sophiſtry of this intrieguing Author. For it mightily pleas'd me, to hear his project, to deduce all knowledge from Natural reaſon, which as he teaches, *p.* 98. Proceeds from plain and obvious Notions, to the moſt obſcure and remoteſt objects.

L. Let Natural reaſon proceed never ſo cautiouſly, yet ſhe can never aſcend ſo high, as to underſtand clearly thoſe ſupernatural things which concern a future State, of which ſhe has here no compleat *Ideas*. And beſides, if God is a free Agent, it follows, he can preſcribe what conditions of ſalvation do beſt pleaſe him: And Natural reaſon can never aſcend to the knowledge of what a free Agent will have done, from any known or obvious Maxims in Nature.

S. No more than one man, by reaſon alone, can tell what is the will and pleaſure of another—But I will ask you one Queſtion more, *Viz.* Who ought to be the Interpreter of Scripture? * for *Spinoſa* gives away that Authority to every private Man.

* P. 103. *penes unumquemque ſummum jus, ſummaque authoritas de religione libere judicandi*, &c.

L. The ambiguous uſe of the word Interpretation, has been the cauſe of much Error, and much Miſchief in the World, it is a Multiplied *Idea*, which will breed

confuſion in the underſtanding, if it be not carefully reſolved into its firſt Principles. For firſt, ſometimes to interpret Scripture, is put to ſignify only, a right apprehenſion of what is the true ſenſe of Scripture, and an expreſſion of that true ſenſe, in plain and proper terms: And this belongs to every individual Man, to whom the Goſpel is Preached. For every man has a right to underſtand thoſe truths that are a-like beneficial to all mankind, and which are therefore promulged, that they may be made known unto all: And as every man has a right to underſtand as much as he can of Divine truths, ſo alſo may he Communicate that knowledge by Speech to others, tho the publick Exerciſe of that Office, do moſt properly belong to the Miniſters of God. But others, by the word Interpret, do underſtand, the Power of affixing what ſenſe they pleaſe upon the Scriptures, and conſtraining others to admit the ſame, be it what it will, as true and genuine. But ſuch an Authority as this, can neither belong to every Private man, nor to any humane Power whatſoever. For no man can have Authority from the God of Truth, to oppoſe truth it ſelf, and it is groſs non-ſenſe, to call Contradiction of Scripture, an Interpretation of it. There is no room for Interpretation, but

but in places that are obſcure and dubious, but plain Texts expound themſelves, and to pretend that every man has a right of affixing a contradictory ſenſe, to the moſt eaſy, expreſs, and intelligible Texts of Scripture, is as much as to ſay, *Every Man has a right to be a Fool, and to deceive himſelf, and to live in Error, and be nurſt up in the ignorance of thoſe things, that moſt concern his Happineſs, and to give the Lye to his great Creator.* Inſtead of believing the Scriptures, to be the Word of God, every private man, according to your Authors Hypotheſis, may believe them lawfully to be the invention of Sathan, or the dictates of Mad-men, or the invention of ſome cunning *Politicians.* What is more plain than our Saviours words, *Mat.* 16. 17. Verſes. *Go you into all the World, and Preach the Goſpel unto every Creatnre. He that believeth and is baptized ſhall be ſaved, but he that believeth not ſhall be damned.*

Summum jus. ſumma autho-ritas.

Suppoſe a man diſcourſing upon theſe words, ſhould pretend to teach from hence, that no Goſpel either was, is, or ever ought to be Preached to the World; *That no man ought to believe that Jeſus is the* Meſſiah, *and that there is no Condemnation to unbelievers either in this World, or in the World to come.* Would you call this an Interpretation of that Text of Scripture?

S.

S. Not if I was in my right Senſes.

L. And yet your prodigal Author gives this large Authority to every private Man, of Interpreting Scripture after this abſurd, and erroneous manner.

S. Perhaps, he only means, *it is in every Man's Power to Interpret Scripture as he pleaſes.*

L. So it is in every Man's power to be Erroneous, and to Act contrary to the *Law of Nature*; but has he therefore a right *to Murder, Steal, or commit Adultery*? But he does not only ſay, *Summum jus libere ſentiendi de Religione penes unumquemque*
p. 103. *eſſe*, but, *Summam Authoritatem Scripturam Interpretandi, apud unumquemque eſſe.*

S. Methinks the right of Interpreting Scripture, ought rather to be given to ſome Body of Men, who are moſt likely to preſerve it.

L. I have already ſhew'd you, *That Contradiction is no Interpretation*, and, *that no Humane power, can have Authority to oppoſe Divine Revelation*, unleſs you could prove, *That Man is more Omniſcient than God.*

S. God forbid, that I ſhould attempt that; for now I begin to hate the very name of *Deiſm*, as it ſtands Oppoſed to the Belief of *Revealed Religion.*

L.

L. And you would hate it more, if you considered, from the Dregs of how many Sects and Factions this Poyson is Extracted, and how much it tends to destroy all *Morality*, and use of right reason in the World. From the *Papists*, it takes the Doctrine *Deficiency*, and *Obscurity* of the *Scriptures*, and the necessity of a *Living Interpreter*. From the *Quakers*, it take the Doctrine of the *Light within*, as sufficient to *Salvation*, (which he calls, *The Law of Nature*, and they term, *the Spirit*,) and of villifying the Scriptures, as meer Paper, and Ink, as he expresly calls 'em, *Chap.* 12. *Pag.* 145. *Vereor ne nimis sancti*; &c. *Simulachra et imagines, hoc est Chartam et atramentum pro Scriptura adorent.* In which words, he makes Reverencing the Scriptures, to be a kind of Idolatry. From the *Independent*, it takes the *Renunciation of Catholick Communion*, and makes every Man, as they do every Congregation, to be a Church as it were to himself, and it borrows something of the Doctrine of *Fatal Necessity* from the rigid *Presbyterian*. Then as to its tendency to *Immorality*, it takes from us all certainty *of the means of Grace, and hope of Glory, through the Mediation of our Blessed Saviour*, and leaves us nothing to Adore, but a careless, deceitful, and inflexible *Deity*, and whilst it pretends to leave us *Piety*, it really

See chap. 12. p. 144, 145

robs

robs us of the true *Ideal of God*: It leaves Justice and Charity, no other encouragement than they can find in this world, and God knows that is often little enough; and it gives the full Reins to Lust, and Appetite, *to Eat, Drink, and be Merry*, for all beyond the Grave, is but Conjecture, or idle Speculation: Nay, it drives the mind unto an assent to so many Absurdities, and Contradictions, as must at last center in downright *Atheism*; for a Man may as well believe, that there is no God at all, as believe *that there is a God*, who has exerted his own power to abuse the World; and *Atheism* in a few Years would run up again into the old *Pagan* Idolatry, (since *Humane Nature* cannot be long without *Religion*,) or some Superstition of (if possible) a more ridiculous, and pernicious Nature.

S. Sir, you need add no more, I am fully satisfied of the necessity of *Revealed Religion*, and only beg your Prayers to Almighty God, that I may increase in all useful Knowledge, and Walk worthy of so Heavenly a Vocation.

L. I am glad if any weak endeavours of mine, can contribute any thing to the Vindication of that Religion, into which I was at first Baptized, and which is now so much opposed by the Fraud, and Malice

lice both of Men, and Devils: *And may God, who has begun this Conversion in your heart, assist you always with his Grace, and make you perfect in every good Work, thro' Jesus Christ our Lord.*

S. *I thank you for your Christian endeavours, and wish you all heavenly farewel.*

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